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SATPANTH ISMAILISM AND MODERN CHANGES WITHIN IT .
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO EAST AFRICA

A.A. Esmail

EX BIBL UNIV. EDINBURGEN

Thesis presented to the University of Edinburgh for the Degree of Ph.D. in the Faculty of Arts, 1971

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SUMMARY

The Ismailis first appeared in history as an offshoot of the Shī'a sect in Islam, upholding, in common with the other Shī'as, the doctrine that 'Alī and his descendants had the sole right to the headship of the Islamic state in succession to the Prophet, and maintaining, in opposition to the other Shī'a groups, that this particular office should always be occupied by a living Imam, directly descended from the Prophet. Thus, an affirmation of the principle of temporal and spiritual leadership on the part of ʿAlī's descendants, and a repudiation of the doctrine of the hidden Imam prevalent among the other Shī'a groups, formed the two most distinctive strands in their ideology. In addition, in the course of history they came to regard the Imam mystically, and to attribute divine powers to him. It is believed that when the Mongols overran the fortress of Alamūt, where the Nizārī Ismailis or "Assassins", a branch of the Fāṭimids, had established a secure enclave, the Imam's son and successor went into hiding, and that he and his successors in turn continued to function as Imama of their congregation,

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though under a cloak of secrecy and disguise. That Ismailism survived the Mongol onslaught is beyond doubt, for evidently, missionaries, or "Pīrs" as they are called, arrived in India after the Mongol invasion to disseminate the faith amidst the populace in Sind, Gujrat, etc., thus creating what is known as the "Khojā" Ismaili community. The religion of the Khojās, called "Satpanth" in the numerous devotional songs and poems (gīnāns) which constitute the legacy of the conversion, is a symbiosis between mystical Islam (Sufism), and certain varieties of Hinduism. In the nineteenth century, the then Imam of the Ismailis, the Aga Khan I emerged from obscurity when he rebelled against the Persian Shah and was forced to flee to India. In the same century, growing numbers of Ismailis began to migrate to East Africa, while from the turn of the present century, the Aga Khan III, the new Imam, rose into prominence on a wide front owing to his multifarious political activities, his interest in the social welfare and advancement of the Muslims, and his friendship with international statesmen, as well as his own colourful social activities. He dies in 1957, after appointing his young grandson to succeed him as the forty-ninth Imam of the Ismailis.

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Upon their arrival in East Africa, the Ismailis found themselves in a milieu strikingly different from the land they had left. The new environment presented a challenge calling forth important modifications in the outlook and social structure of the community, especially in the wake of the impact of Western culture. An analysis of the way in which the community responded to this challenge, and the subsequent ever-shifting pattern of interaction between the religious system and the cultural life of the community, forms the essential part of this thesis. The political and cultural changes to which the Ismailis showed themselves to be especially susceptible, led to movements on a deeper and less directly observable plane, serving to sustain an over-all compatibility between the religious and social spheres of the community. The role of the Aga Khan III and his successor in initiating and steering these changes has been crucial, since both Imams, with their tremendous authority in the community and their close acquaintance with the Western world, encouraged the community to revolutionize their life-style. The authority and respect that they proved to have in the community serves to draw attention to the historical beliefs regarding the Imāmat, which form the core of the Ismaili world-view. The Imāmat, indeed, has been an institution of archetypal significance in being the focus

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of tremendous psychic energy on the part of the Ismailis, channelled into mystical worship as well as social cohesion. The interaction between a centuries old tradition furnishing sharp boundries to the ethos of the community, and the truly revolutionary changes ushered in by momentous events, the chief one of these being the end of colonial rule and the attainment of independent status by the East African countries, has been highly complex. In this process, the Imāmat, represented in the Aga Khan, served an at once catalytic and redressive function. Throughout this thesis, while the changes triggered off by impact from internal and external forces in the community are described in detail, it has also been found rewarding to harness the insights of sociological theory in order to identify and understand the forces at work.

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Note regarding transliteration

The following points should be noted in connection with the transliteration of non-English terms in this thesis:

1. Arabic and Persian words which remain outside the class of those words of Arabic and Persian origin which have become key-terms in Indian Ismailism, are transliterated in accordance with the conventional rules governing transliteration from Arabic and Persian into English.

2. For the rest, those words of Arabic or Persian origin which have come to be employed among the Khoja Ismailis as key-terms in their thought, as well as more straightforwardly Gujrati words, are all transliterated here in accordance with the form in which they are spelt in the Gujrati literature in question.

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Chapter I

The General Background

The Ismailis have come to be well-known in the modern world as followers of His Highness the Aga Khan. This statement, in spite of its very general nature, implicitly brings out two features of fundamental importance in the description of contemporary Ismaili societies. Firstly, by defining them as followers of the Aga Khan, the statement rightly identifies the belief in the Imāmat (of which office the Aga Khan is the current holder) as the focal point in the Ismaili religious and social system. Indeed, the doctrine of Imāmat has been the primary differentiating feature of Ismailism since its emergence, and in spite of numerous historical changes in the course of time, the central functional importance of the Imāmat has persisted, and has as a matter of fact occupied a pivotal position in reference to social changes. Secondly, by the very nature of the definition, the statement implies that contemporary Ismaili communities are distinct units in their respective environments - in other words communities sufficiently

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delineated to be identified as distinct from other societies on the basis of definite characteristics. Though it is not necessary that a group of people should be organized on self-conscious lines for them to be identifiable as a society, a certain minimum organization providing for the essential interaction of the individual members of the society seems to be the general feature of most societies. A distinctive feature of contemporary Ismaili societies, however, is an elaborate system of organization which is not unlike that of a political institution or state, so that in addition to the normal criteria for identifying the Ismailis in a particular country as a distinct "society" on their own, observers frequently point out the distinctive nature of their organization as a secondary differentiating factor in relation to other societies. Both these features will be discussed in greater detail at a later stage in this thesis. For the present, it is essential to consider at some length the historical background of the rise and development of Ismailism as a sect in Islam, so that relevant processes of continuity and change in the historical development of the system can be located and isolated for later sections of this work.

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There are several justifications for a preliminary discussion of the historical background of the rise of Ismailism as a separate movement within the Shī'a sect of Islam, as a prelude to this study. The chief of these is that such a consideration is essential for the theoretical presuppositions of this thesis. Changes within an institution or society cannot be analysed except against a background of continuity. This necessitates the isolation of a particular constant feature or a set of such constant features against which the changes can be examined. I intend to propose the view that the belief in the Imāmat constitutes the constant feature of Ismailism in the period with which we are concerned in this thesis. Indeed, the isolation of this constant feature is essential for our being able to proceed at all with this study, for there ought to be a common denominator for us to be able to identify two societies at different points of time, both "Ismaili". However, the institution of the Imāmat during this period is but a phase in the history of the institution since the time it came into being as the distinctive feature of Ismailism. Considering the issue from a slightly different angle, a major theoretical question in the

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historical study of Ismailism would be whether the different Ismaili societies in history ought to be considered as constituting one system on the whole, or whether they should be treated separately as totally different societies. The first extreme is as consistent with an ideological or apologetic position, and therefore untenable for our purpose, as the second is unhistorical. The solution to the problem lies in singling out from the various societies their religious system (i.e. Ismailism). Indeed in comtemporary East Africa, for instance, where the Ismailis share common cultural characteristics with other societies of Indian origin, and a common national loyalty with other citizens of the respective countries, the importance of their religious system as the sole differentiating factor of their society needs to be especially emphasized. Again, however, to treat Ismailism as a homogenous doctrinal entity through the course of history is historically untenable. Within Ismailism, therefore, a second process of isolation could be carried out, and the belief in a specific line of Imāmat can be identified as the distinguishing feature which renders justifiable the designation of both the Fāṭimid system in Egypt in the 10th century, and

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the Satpanth system in Gujerat in the fifteenth century, for instance, as "Ismaili".

Apart from the relevance of the earlier history of Ismailism to the theoretical framework of this study, certain other factors linking contemporary Ismailism to its historical precedents ought to be noted. Social systems "contain" their past, so to speak, in an incapsulated form. In other words, the structure of a society and its institutions at a given time have their historical past incorporated into them, just as an individual personality at a given moment in the present contains its past in an incapsulated form. Evidence of transmission of ideas through time in specific cases reinforces this concept of incapsulation of the past. The history of the conversion of various societies to Ismailism at different times in different parts of the world shows that some of the essential and indispensable characteristics of Ismailism were transmitted to the faith of the converts, and were adopted as central features through which the new followers could find a social identity. In other cases the work of conversion was affected by certain important original characteristics

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of Ismailism which were very much a part of the spiritual orientation of the missionaries. This in turn influenced the shape and form of the ideational system of the converts. In a more straightforward way, the existence of its past within a social system at a given time in the present is shown by the members' awareness of their history, either through interest in historical works, or through oral tradition, or through what is called "mythological history", i.e. conceptions of the past which do not coincide with historical reality, but which, nevertheless, are not necessarily divorced from this reality. The relevance of these ideas to contemporary Ismaili Societies will be discussed later. For the present, after thus having located the points of interaction between contemporary Ismailism and its past, we will proceed to a brief discussion of the historical background to the central importance of the Imāmat in the Ismaili world-view.

The problems arising on the death of a charismatic leader such as a prophet have certain common features all over the world. Whether succession to the leadership of the Islamic community (divested, of course, of the prophetic qualification of Muhammad) was to depend on the principle of hereditarily transmitted

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charisma or on selection by representatives of the community who occupied more or less the same role as elders or patriarchs in the pre-Islamic social structure, was a question that existed in germinal form at the death of the Prophet, although it does not seem to have arisen as a serious issue until after the death of ʿUthmān, the third Khalīfa. The "Shī'a", of whom the Ismailis are a sub-sect, later came to be used as a general term standing for all those groups who held that 'Alī, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet and one of the first converts to Islam, was the legitimate successor to the Prophet, and that the right to the Khilāfa or leadership of the Islamic community was restricted to his family. Exactly when the Shī'a movement originated, and what factors played a causal role in its development, is a matter of historical interpretation, for it depends on the degree of articulation and defined doctrine that one holds to be necessary before it can be characterized as a distinct movement. To be sure, there had been individuals during the life of 'Alī who at best seem to have accorded him a veneration closely bordering on the religious.[1] At any rate, after the Battle of

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Ṣiffīn in 657 A.D., the desertion of the Khawārij led to the beginning of a polarization of views about the Khilāfa from which the Shi a later emerged as a distinctive group. The martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn at Kerbala in 680 A.D. not only sealed any immediate possibilities of the absorption of the Shīʿa within the mainstream of orthodox Islam but, what is more important for certain aspects of this study, also introduced the sense of the tragic, the passion associated with an oppressive awareness of suffering and martyrdom, as the chief characteristic of the religious experience of the Shiʿite. The growing number of Muslim converts from the Aramaeans of Iraq and from the inhabitants of the Iranian provinces (both with long traditions of divine kingship in their respective societies), and the status of inferiority to which they found themselves relegated as members of the mawālī class, as well as increasing resentment against the Umayyad rulers, are important factors. These and other factors must be noted as constituting a complex of characteristic social phenomena which rendered particular strata of Islamic society predisposed to receiving and developing with singular zeal ideas centered round the necessity of a divinely

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appointed saviour. In any case, what is important to note for the purpose of the present study is the Shi'ite ideas forming the content of that particular type of religiosity within the framework of Islam that laid emphasis on the purity and supreme wisdom of the 'Alid progeny, an emphasis that was charged with strong emotional intensity derived from the tragic death of Imam Ḥusayn at Kerbela and a subsequent history of persecution.

With the passage of time expectations of an imminent victory of one or other 'Alid figure gave way to a more stabilized belief in a continuous succession of Imams as the only legitimate form of leadership. A theocratic conception of the Islamic state, to which were added religious ideas of the infallibility and mystical knowledge of the Imams, became the mainstay of the Shi'ite doctrine. It is not surprising that frequent contentions in the history of the Shī'a were based on which member of the deceased Imam's family was to be acknowledged as his rightful successor. The death of Imam Ja'far aṣ Ṣādiq in 765 A.D. was an occasion for one such important conflict. A section of his followers adopted his younger son Mūsā as his

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successor, while another section declared the right to the Imāmat to be residing in the descendants of his elder son, Ismā'īl. The former came to be known as Ithna'ashariyya or "twelvers", since they acknowledged only twelve Imams. The gist of the beliefs that emerged as part of the community's creed was that the twelfth Imam had gone into concealment and would re-emerge as the triumphant saviour. The other section of the community, who adopted Ismā'īl's descendants as the Imam, came to be known as Ismailis. They organized an elaborate system of dā'īs, for prosely-tization. Successful mission activity in the Maghrib led to the establishment of the Fāṭimid dynasty of Ismaili Imams in 909 A.D. The empire thus founded lasted for over two centuries. A second important split occurred in 1094 on the death of Al-Mustanṣir bi-l-lāh, when a section adopted his younger son Musta'lī as the Imam, while another section of the community proclaimed the elder son Nizār as the Imam. The latter came to be known as Nizārī Ismailis.

It is important to note at this stage, in view of the later discussion on Imāmat in this thesis, the specific nature of the ideation in early Ismailism. Significant differences exist between the Fāṭimid notion

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of hierarchy in the cosmos and in the religious order, as well as its highly intellectual and abstract doctrine, and the Nizārī doctrine with its predominating emotional and Sufistic trend. These differences, however, are not absolute, and the equally strong emphasis on the Imāmat in both systems provides a link between the ideation of the two systems. In general, Fāṭimid Ismaili doctrine rested, as did later Ismailism, on the dichotomy between the ẓāhir, or exoteric aspects of the Faith, and the bāṭin, or its exoteric aspects. The latter should not be confused with "secret" doctrine. Rather, it denotes the spirit behind the letter of the Islamic revelation, or its "inner" meaning. While the revelation of the law was promulgated by the Prophet, it remained up to the Imam to interpret the law through his wisdom, for he was gifted with the power of ta'wīl. This basic dichotomy intersected with the macrocosmic-microcosmic concepts of the world, religion and man derived from Greek philosophy, which were integrated within an Islamic framework. Thus the world came into being through "emanations", which are organized in a hierarchical relationship. This doctrine is expounded in its most abstract and systematic form in the works of Nāṣir-i-Khusraw.[2] The Supreme

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Being in this system is presented as utterly transcendent and incomprehensible, who created the Aqli-kull, or "Universal Reason", through His Amr, or Act of Volition. Immediately below the Aqli-kull in the hierarchy of emenations comes the Nafs-ī-Kull, or "Universal Soul", following which there are many emanations, each subordinate to the one going before it. This cosmic hierarchy has a corresponding system in the human organism, and, what is more important, in the order of religious functionaries. For the Prophet (also called the nāṭiq or "speaker", since he promulgates the revelation), is the highest entity in the hierarchy, followed immediately by the asās or wasī who is 'Alī, the first Imam, continued, so to speak, in the succeeding Imams, each of whom is also called the sāmit or "the silent one". Below him is a hierarchy of dā'īs, headed by the hujjat or the "Proof", the chief dā'ī. It is interesting to note that this highly systematized conceptual structure is paralleled by an equally systematized political structure. Perhaps the political vicissitudes of the Nizārī community, and the day to day uncertainty with which they had to cope, was not unrelated to the abandonment of the strictness with which this

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hierarchical system had been maintained. For in the Nizārī Ismaili doctrine we find the hierarchy reduced, and in place of this intellectualistic element we find a strongly emotional and mystical element.[3]

We will now turn briefly to the other major area of Ismaili mission activity, the area which is more immediately relevant from the historical point of view to the present study, the Indo-Pak subcontinent. As early as during the Pre-Fāṭimid phase of Ismailism, Ismaili missionaries had been active in Sind.[4] From Sind, Ismailism spread to Multan, Gujrat, and Punjab, and was established in these areas while the Fāṭimids ruled in Egypt. An interesting feature of conversion activity at this time was that the dā'īs working in India were in contact with the Imam at Cairo, and thus a centralized control from the Fāṭimid headquarters seems to have been maintained. Ismaili activity appears to have survived in the kingdoms of Multan and Mansurah in Sind despite frequent invasions and persecution from other dynasties, culminating in the militant and savage attacks by Mahmud of Ghazna.[5] Indeed, the two kingdoms were frequently subjected to prolonged Ismaili rule.[6] Finally, the Sumra dynasty

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took over Sind from the Ghaznavids in the middle of the eleventh century, and ruled over Sind for over three centuries. Historical evidence makes it seem most likely that the Sumras were Ismailis. [7]

The decisive event for the emergence of a new and distinct form of Ismailism in India, however, was the arrival of Nizārī Ismaili missionaries from Persia from the twelfth century onwards. There are several important differences between the Fāṭimid mission in India and that of the Nizārī Persian missionaries. While the Fāṭimid da'īs seem to have been under general supervision from the central organization of the da'wa in North Africa, the Nizārī Ismailis preached almost wholly on their own initiative. Again, far from being part of a central organization for proselytization, the Nizārī Ismaili missionaries or "Pīrs" as they are called in Ismaili literature, preached as individuals. In fact, during the period of the great Pīrs, only one Pīr is said to have been recognized as such during his lifetime, so that according to the tradition prevalent in the Ismaili community today, each phase in the history of the spread of Ismailism in India is dominated by a particular Pīr. The over-all result of this is

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that the Pīrs stand out in the literature of Ismailism as individual figures of dominating importance, regarded by the converts as next only to the Imam. Indeed, although ideas regarding the Imāmat formed the essential core of the new teaching, the fact that the new converts (whose world in any case must have extended no further than their own village or the immediately surrounding area) had not seem the Imam nor could possibly have had any notion of the geographical situation of his residence, must have added considerably to the importance of the Pīr as the only tangible and concrete symbol of their new faith. In addition to this, the Hindu tendency to venerate the "Guru" or religious teacher, as well as the Sufistic concept of the divine knowledge of the "Pīr" or "Murshid" (it is interesting to note, incidentally, the use of the common term "Pīr" for the religious guide in both Persian Sufism and Indian Ismailism), reinforced the overwhelming importance of the Pīr in the new system. Finally, while Ismailis, or at least certain Ismaili families in Sind during the Fāṭimid period were politically active, the converts to Nizārī Ismailism were solely preoccupied with non-political and mystical interests. It seems possible, however, that large numbers of people from single castes were converted to Ismailism, and that these castes consisted

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of those who were not irretrievably entrenched in the traditional Hindu caste structure. For it seems reasonable to suppose that such a conversion on a collective basis could have taken place in only those groups among whom the caste norms were imperfectly institutionalized.

The new religion which came into being as a result of the preaching of the Pīrs was a symbiosis of Hindu and Islamic ideas. The Hinduism in the new faith was represented by carefully selected ideas, among which beliefs about the successive incarnations of Vishnu figured centrally, while the Islamic element was represented by Nizārī Ismailism, shorn of its hierarchical aspect, and reinforced by a strongly mystical element. Ivanow remarks on the difficulties in conversion encountered by Sunnī Muslim missionaries whose puristic demands meant that the new converts were in effect not only to be Islamized but also "Arabicized".[8] The Ismaili Pīrs, on the other hand, were prepared to approve continued observance of indigenous customs, so long as certain fundamental principles of Islam were made the basis of "the inner and intimate life".[9] The Sufistic orientation of Ismailism reinforced this symbiotic aspect of the new faith, for, "laying stress on the moral and spiritual

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moments in religious life, the doctrine of the Pīrs did not attach special importance to the forms of outward piety." [10]

The chief Islamic element in the new faith consisted of the implications of the belief that divine revelation had begun with Adam and was perfected in Muhammad, that there was a long series of inspired messengers in between, and that no nation or people in history had been left without divine guidance. Drawing the implications of this belief to the full, the Pīrs explained the "Avatars" or "incarnations" in Hindu belief as periodic manifestations of the Deity. The process of manifestation or epiphany of the Divine Being, however, according to the Pīrs, had not stopped, and ʿAlī was the tenth incarnation of the Divine Essence who was continued, so to speak, in his successor Imams. Each Imam was a manifestation of the Divine Essence and obedience to him was the only means of gaining salvation. To this central concept, which exists as the focal point of the teaching of the Pīrs, were added Hindu ideas of rebirth and cosmogony, as well as certain carefully selected elements from Hindu mythology, to constitute a more or less systematic teaching. The new faith was called "Satpanth", or "true path".

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According to Ismaili tradition, it was Pīr Sadardīn who attempted to organize the followers of the new faith on rudimentary lines, by building them a jamat-khana where they could worship, and appointing a mukhī as the official presiding over the congregation. These have survived today as the essential features of the organization of the Ismaili communities in India, Pakistan, East Africa and certain other places. It is again Pīr Sadardīn who is said to have named the new followers "Khwājā", loosely translated as "gentlemen", the term which is still in existence today in its corrupted form, "Khojā". The teachings of the new faith were embodied in profoundly mystical poems called "gīnāns" (from the Sanskrit jnan, meaning "knowledge"). It is the poetic appeal of the ginans which forms the main content of the religious experience in Satpanth Ismailism. Wldamir Ivanow rightly attributes the distinctive mystical religiosity of Satpanth to the poetic intensity of the gīnāns. Reamrking on "the strange fascination, the majestic pathos and beauty" of the gīnāns, he observes that their "mystical appeal equals, if not exceeds, that exercised by the Coran on Arabic speaking peoples".[11]

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It was this set of beliefs, embodied in the gīnāns and based primarily on the belief in the continued presence of the Imam on earth as the tenth incarnation of the Divine Essence, which was in existence among the Khojās of the Indo-Pak sub-continent when the Aga Khan I migrated to India. The latter was the forty-sixth Imam in direct descent from 'Alī according to Ismaili tradition, and he arrived at Bombay in 1845, after having been involved in political conflict on his home-ground in Persia. By this time, a long tradition of taqiyya or dissimulation of belief with an end to escaping from persecution, as well as the absence of the Imam or any outstanding deputy of his from among the community since the period of the important Pīrs, had resulted in a state of highly amorphous and informal organization. This afforded ample room for what is often called "deviant behaviour". An important expression of dissent culminated in the famous Khojā case of 1866. Meanwhile, a growing number of Ismaili migrant families had been settling in Zanzibar, off the coast of East Africa, and, in later years, in other important coastal towns. The repercussions of the dissent were felt in the new home of the migrants, where parallel movements of

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secession took place. The task of the Imam and the loyal followers was therefore to give a more firmly defined identity to the community through stress on central and differential doctrinal concepts, through definite and uniform religious practices, through constitutional actions, and, finally, through internal organization. Our purpose in this thesis will be to study these changes within an analytic framework. At this stage, therefore, we will devote a few words to the theoretical methods which will constitute this analytic framework.

Properly speaking, the rest of the chapters in this thesis will contain an account of the changes in the social structure, institutions and religious ideation of the Khojā Ismaili societies, against a background of the essential features of Satpanth. The point of departure in time for the study of these changes will be the arrival of the Imam Hasan'alīshāh in Bombay in 1845. The area in reference to which the impact of these changes will be discussed, especially in connection with the Imāmat of the Aga Khan III (1885-1957), is East Africa. By necessity, therefore, this study will draw its insights from the theoretical orientations of both History and

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Sociology. While a non-sociologically orientated history of the community would fail to do justice to its social dynamics, one of the assumptions of this thesis is that the "pure" sociological studies of Ismailis have severe limitations for the following two reasons: (a) because such a sociological study, owing to its methodological demands would necessitate the selection of one Ismaili society in a restricted area in the present for concentrated study, to that extent it is historical. In view of the importance of historical events and the transmission of religious ideas in the Ismailis, such a study would afford only a partial and perhaps even an erroneous picture. (b) as a sequel to this, and by virtue of some of their theoretical presuppositions, sociological studies sometimes have a tendency to obscure the importance of the impact of ideas, especially religious doctrines, on society - a factor which will be considered as fundamentally important in this thesis.

In the following chapters, therefore, we will outline the changes in the organization of the Ismaili society in East Africa over the specified period. In the course of considering these changes,

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we will also refer to the changes in the relationship of the community with other Muslim communities, with other communities of Indian origin, and with the political developments in the country. Also, relevant social processes in the other communities will be noted on a comparative basis, so that valid generalizations regarding differential factors can be attempted. Throughout the study, we shall devote a large part of our attention to the religious ideation of the community, discussing its impact upon the social changes and, in turn, the impact of the latter on the religious ideas. The belief in the Imāmat as the essential basis of this ideation will be isolated in order to provide the continuous factor against which the changes can be examined. Finally, an attempt will be made to integrate our findings within a comprehensive interpretative framework.

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Chapter II

The Doctrine in the Gīnāns

The Gīnāns are one of the important mainsprings of the religious life of the Ismailis in East Africa. In this, the latter share a fundamental characteristic in common with the Ismailis in India and Pakistan, and in some other countries. Properly speaking, the gīnāns are poetic compositions, written in different Indian languages and divided into varying numbers of stanzas or verses, all arranged in metrical form (though the metre is not always strictly observed, resulting at some places in a looseness of form that comes close to prose). The poetic form of each gīnān is associated with a specific tune in which it is intended to be sung aloud. Certain gīnāns, however, have a single tune ascribed to them, and these can therefore be identified in groups, although there are very few gīnāns which thus share tunes in common. The last verse of each gīnān usually contains the name of the Pīr supposed to have composed it, and is usually in the form "Pīr so-and-so said ....". In this they resemble the Persian Ghazals, with their Takhallus. Apart from the numerous single gīnāns, believed to have been written by various Pīrs, there are several large gīnāns, some indeed running into

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several hundreds of stanzas, attributed to one or the other Pīr. The content of the ginans consists mainly of rhetorical questions, didactic statements, similes and parables, and their appeal is poetic and intensely emotional and inspirational, rather than scholastic or logistic. A general examination of the contents of the gīnāns is the main concern of this chapter, and will follow a preliminary discussion of the conversion process traditions regarding individual Pīrs, and some essential features of the religion they preached.

From the point of view of the analytic framework of this thesis, it should be noted that the material in the gīnāns, examined in this chapter, will furnish for us a point of departure against which developments in East African Ismailism can be assessed in terms of contrast. In other words, the gīnāns, along with cultural traits and customs and practices, derived from Indian society, would constitute a point of departure from which a study of the development of new values which had adaptive functions in the East African milieu could be undertaken. An important fact to be noted here is that the gīnāns have remained the mainstay of Ismaili religious life until this day, and they occupy the same position in the doctrinal system of the

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Ismailis in East Africa as they do in the doctrine of the Ismailis in some other countries, including India and Pakistan. This feature of contemporary Ismailism serves only to underline the fact that at any given point in time, a particular social system can comprise parallel trends, some consisting of relatively recent developments, others being a continuation of traditions taken over from the more remote past. This is notably true of the Ismaili society in East Africa, where the gīnāns are a constant element in the doctrine, inherited from the historical process of conversion in the Indo-Pak sub-continent several centuries ago. Nothing can be more inappropriate, therefore, than to ascribe to the whole of the Ismaili social system in East Africa a specific date as a starting point. In matters of religion, the East African Ismaili really belongs to two belief-systems — one consisting of the original Satpanth (embodied in the gīnāns), the other comprising new sets of values evolved in East Africa. Rather than using a chronological point of departure, therefore, we have decided to isolate the gīnāns as the embodiment of doctrinal elements which are a persisting feature of East African Ismailism, carried over from Satpanth.

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Parallel to this feature, however, one can find new developments which are confined to East Africa, and will be studied later. For the moment, we will proceed to a discussion of Ismaili tradition regarding the more outstanding Pīrs and their preaching-work, and of the more salient features of the new faith adopted by the converts. This will be followed by an analysis of the actual material in the gīnāns.

Any attempt to construct a historical account of the origins of Satpanth and of the contribution of individual Pīrs to its development is hampered bya major obstacle in what Ivanow calls the "notoriously unhistoric" character of the Indian mind, which has a tendency to deal with the past in symbols and astronomical figures rather than dates.[1] Coupled with this, and directly observable in the gīnāns, is the tendency on the part of the authors to be disinterested in "actual situations", as opposed to religious ideas and the symbols employed in order to convey mystical experiences. Another source of this indifference to "actual" history lies in the interest on the part of the authors in mythical stories, which were valued solely for the moral inferences that could be obtained

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from them. However, for our purpose here, it will be sufficient to note the names of the main Pīrs believed to be responsible for the composition of the gīnāns, as well as Khojā tradition concerning their lives and preaching.

The earliest Pīr to preach Satpanth in the Indo-Pak sub-continent, according to Khojā tradition, was someone called Satgur Nur. There is considerable difference of opinion as to when exactly he reached India. According to one set of traditions, he is said to have been sent to India by the Imam al-Mustanṣir bi-l-lāh in the 11th century A.D.[2] Some writers cite later dates.[3] He is said to have converted certain low castes in Gujrat (such as the Kanbis, Kharvas and Koris), to Ismailism.[4] The collection of gīnāns in use among the Ismailis today contains only nine gīnāns said to have been composed by him[5], in addition to two long ones, Pīr Satgurnurnā Putlā and Paribrahmvarne Pujo. He is credited with various miracles and is said to have been married to the daughter of a local king in Navsari, where his shrine is to be found. On the whole he is very little known among the Ismailis today.

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The next Pīr to arrive in India, according to tradition among the Khojās, was Pīr Shams. Certain traditions regarding him identify him with Shamsi-Tabrīz, the mysterious teacher of Jalāl-ad-Dīn Rūmī. Such accounts are obviously untenable from a historical point of view. Once again, traditions among his followers credit him with a series of miracles. He is said to have been sent to India by the Imam Qāsim Shāh, and is believed to have travelled to Kashmir through Badakhshan, Hindukush and Pamir, preaching on the way, and finally, in Multan and Punjab.[6] An interesting tradition concerning him relates how the Pīr, during the course of his wanderings, came upon garbī celebrations of the nortā, the nine days preceding the Hindu festival of daserā, at a place called Analvad in Gujrat. The term garbī, properly referring to the stage in the temple compound bearing the lamps for the occasion, is also used for the songs accompanying the dancing. According to Khojā history, the Pīr joined the dancers, but substituted new garbīs composed by himself and expounding the doctrines of Satpanth, for those which were being recited. He thus impressed upon the dancers the futility of their own beliefs and the superiority of Satpanth, and in this way eventually converted them to the new faith.

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As a matter of fact, these garbīs form part of the collection of gīnāns attributed to Pīr Shams, found among the Ismailis today. There are twenty-eight garbīs in existence, each of them composed in a tune that can be accompanied by the appropriate form of dancing (though the dancing has never been known to take placeamong the Ismailis). Almost all of them end in a refrain. The songs include critical remarks directed at idolatry, repeated references to ʿAlī and the descendant Imams as the collective tenth avtār of God, as well as verses celebrating the ecstasy of the beatific vision acquired through meditation.[7] An interesting feature of the garbīs that should be noted here is their agricultural imagery, which suggests the existence of a body of converts from among the peasants and farmers.[8]

Another interesting story about Pīr Shams relates how, during prayers in a mosque at Multan, the Pīr sat down halfway through the salāt and began to eat his meal. On being rebuked for his disrespectful behaviour after the prayer was finished, he replied that he had noticed that the imam leading the prayer was distracted and had his mind on everything except the prayer itself,

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and that to follow him in prayer was therefore futile. It was for this reason that he had broken off from the service, for true prayer was that which came from the heart.[9] The collection of gīnāns attributed to Pīr Shams' authorship among the Ismailis today comprises 106 gīnāns. In addition, the following large gīnāns are supposed to have been composed by him:

(1) Saloko Moto (2) Brahm Prakāsh
(3) Man Samjānī (4) Vāyak Moto
(5) Hans Hanslī (6) Kathā Rājā Govarchandnī
(7) Garbī (already discussed above).

The next important Pīr in Khojā history, Pīr Sadardīn, has come to be regarded as the real founder of the Khojā community, for he is said to have founded a jamātkhānā with a Mukhī, or a presiding officer, at a place called Kotdi, in Sindh. Moreover, it is he who is usually quoted in connection with the distinctive doctrines of Indian Ismailism. However, the historical validity of this tradition has yet to be conclusively established. Certainly, he is the most well known among the Pīrs, in that he is associated in the popular mind with the most important ideas in Satpanth. On the other hand, the gīnāns attributed to him are not substantially different from those attributed to the

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other Pīrs. It could be argued that the gīnāns may have become homogeneous through latter day changes. The counter-argument to this assertion would be that, since no other versions of the gīnāns are available, the claim that a particular Pīr's gīnāns are different from those of others cannot but be based on the existing gīnāns. Thus the burden of proof would lie on those who argue or imply that the gīnāns of the particular Pīr in question may have originally been different in a specific way from those of others. However, it is apparent that the different missionaries must not all have preached in exactly the same area, and the tradition associating Pīr Sadardīn with the main body of the Khojās may be a reflection of authentic facts concerning the geographical distribution of the early converts and consequent differences of a regional sort. In the studies of modern scholars, Pīr Sadardīn has come to be associated with das avtār ("ten incarnations"), a ginan that enumerates the various incarnations of God in accordance with the Hindu belief in avtārvād, and culminates in the last section of the gīnān in the claim that ʿAlī, the first Imam of the Ismailis, is the expected tenth incarnation of God, "continued" in his successor Imams. However, the idea that the das avtār is the

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religious book of the Khojā Ismailis [10] is not entirely correct, for the doctrine asserting ʿAlī as the expected tenth manifestation of God is common to several ginans, and not confined to the das avtār. True enough, until quite recently, the das avtār used to be recited among the Khojā Ismailis at the bedside of a dying person. But it should be noted in this connection that there is a general tendency in the community for particular ginans to be singled out for recitation on particular occasions and festivals. According to Ismaili tradition Pīr Sadardīn is said to have been sent out by the Imam Islāmshāh[11], and references to the Imam occur frequently in the gīnāns. He is said to have preached in Sindh, Punjab, Kutch, Kathiavar, and Gujrat, and is believed to have made two subsequent journeys to Iran to visit the Imam.[12] He is buried at a place called Uchchh, which belonged to Upper Sind during the Middle Ages, but is now part of Punjab. Pīr Sadardīn is believed to be the author of 218 gīnāns in the possession of the Ismailis today, in addition to the following large ones:

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(1) Buj Niranjan (2) Saloko Nāno (3) To Munīvarbhāi Motī
(4) Das Avtār Moto (5) Das Avtār Nāno
(6) So Kīryā (7) Girbhāwli (8) Ārādhnā (9) Vīnodh
(10) Gavantrī (11) Khat Darshan (12) Khat Nīrinjan
(13) Budh Avtār

The next Pīr in the tradition of the Khojā Ismailis is Pīr Hasan Kabīrdīn, who is believed to be Pīr Sadardīn's son. The most distinctive hallmark of the gīnāns attributed to him is an acute sense of contriteness and dereliction, which finds expression in numberous and intense prayers and outbursts of passionate longing for the beatific vision. In several of his gīnāns, love for the divine, and the longing to be accepted by God are expressed in terms of the relationship of human love. A popular tradition concerning him narrates how when he was a young boy, the Pīr was hurt by his father's refusal to take him along with him on one of his journeys to Iran for dīdār of the Imam. In the agonizing disappointment suffered as a result of being thus deprived of the chance to see the Imam, the Pīr is said to have knitted a turban in devotion to the Imam, simultaneously composing verses embodying his longing for an audience with the Imam. The gīnāns

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also speak of him travelling to Iran a short time later and presenting the turban to the Imam in person, receiving blessings in return and the responsibility of converting and guiding, as Pīr, "infinite" numbers of peoples in India.[13] Pīr Hasan Kabīrdīn is credited with the authorship of 75 gīnāns in the possession of the Ismailis today, beside the following large ones:

(1) Anant Akhādo (2) Nav Chhugā
(3) Pīr Hasan Kabīrdīn ane Kānīpā Jogino Sanvād
(4) Brahm Gavantrī (5) Vel (6) Hasnā Purī

The next most important figure in the history of the preaching of Satpanth is Saiyad Imāmshāh, Pīr Hasan Kabīrdīn's son. Tradition among the Khojā Ismailis concerning him draws a distinction between him and his predecessors (i.e. the Pīrs discussed above), on the grounds that while the latter had been "officially" appointed as Pīrs by the Imam, Imāmshāh and the other "Saiyads" in his posterity were not so appointed, although they carried out preaching of Ismailism with remarkable ardour and success.[14] Such a distinction obviously presents problems from the point of view of historical criticism. It is not unlikely that this

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explanation may have arisen as a result of an after-thought, as part of an attempt to play down the importance of the personalities associated, rightly or wrongly, with the so-called Imāmshāhi split. The Imāmshāhis, or Satpanthis as they call themselves, are a small sect with adherents found in Gujrat, Kathiavar, Kutch, Berar and Khandesh. They are the descendants of a dissenting body which claimed Saiyad Imāmshāh as the Imam, and thus broke away from the main stream of Satpanth. In an attempt to disown their Ismaili ancestry, they denied that the Pīrs had anything to do with the Ismailis (a claim which, of course, is entirely untenable in the light of history [15]). At the same time, they accept all the Imams up to the time of the split, which probably took place some time after the death of Imāmshāh. Khojā tradition gives 1520 A.D. as the date of his death[16].

Tradition among the Ismailis is equivocal about the split. While some blame seems to be directed against Imāmshāh himself[17], the main responsibility for the division is laid on his son, Saiyad Narmahmadshāh. In Kalāme Imāme Mubīn II, Imāmshāh himself appears to be absolved from blame for the split.[18]

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Ivanow is of a similar opinion, and believes that while Imāmshāh remained loyal to the Imam, his son Narmahmadshāh brought about the split. Tradition relates how the latter ordered a certain Kheta, who was responsible for the collection of the dasond, or religious tax, to hand over the funds to him instead of sending them to the Imam through the Pīr, which had been the practice until then. This led to a split, with the dissident minority following Saiyad Narmahmadshāh, who claimed himself as the incarnation of the Imam. To give his claim greater weight and authority, he extended it retrospectively, and it was in this way that the split came to be associated with Saiyad Imāmshāh[19]. The gīnāns believed to have been written by the latter are part of the collection among the Ismailis today, and are frequently recited in the jamātkhānās. The gīnāns attributed to his authorship number 162, beside the following large works:

(1) Satvenī Motī (2) To Munīvarbhāi Nānī
(3) Moman Chetāmnī (4) Jannatpuri (5) Bāvan Ghāti
(6) Mul Gavantrī (7) Parab Pāndav
(8) Atharvedī Gavantrī (9) Naklank Gītā
(10) Jugeshvar Abunā Gīnān

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In addition to the works attributed to the Pīrs discussed above, one also finds in the possession of the Ismailis today a number of gīnāns believed to have been composed by persons known as "Saiyad"s rather than Pīrs. These were probably descendants of Saiyad Imāmshāh. The more well-known among these Saiyads whose gīnāns are recited today include Saiyad Narmahmadshāh, Imāmshāh's son, already mentioned above, to whose authorship is ascribed an extremely long and intensely mystical book of verse called Satveṇī Nānī. The Satveṇījī Vel is also believed to have been written by him. Other Saiyads whose gīnāns are popular include Saiyad Gulāmalīshāh, and a lady called Imām Begam, who is supposed to have lived at a place called Thaṇa, near Bombay, as late as during the Imāmat of Hasanʿalīshāh, the Aga Khan I[20]. Two other large works, the Si Harfi (again a mystical poem) attributed to Saiyad Ahmadshāh, and the Kalāme Mowlā, believed to be the maxims of the Imam ʿAlī, ought to be noted here.

The process of interaction between certain forms of Hinduism and certain varieties of Islamic belief, and the resulting symbiosis in the form of Satpanth,

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has already been commented upon in the last chapter[21]. Suffice it to note here that this interaction was more complex than would be suggested by any notion of direct "intrusion" of Islamic beliefs or direct "borrowing" of Hindu ideas. While the idea that the Creator manifests himself through avtārs and that ʿAlī continued in his successor Imams, is the final avtār on earth forms the most prominent feature of the doctrine, the rest of the elements in Satpanth suggest a complex eclecticism. The complexity of the process lies, among other factors, in the selectivity exercised over the diverse material in the systems which provided the ingredients of the new faith. While the four Vedas (the Rigveda, the Samaveda, the Yajurveda and the Atharveda) are acknowledged as books containing godly wisdom, much of their content is disregarded. For instance, one hears nothing of the numerous gods in the Rigveda, such as Agnī, Indrā, Varuṇā, Prajāpati, etc. This is not surprising in view of the monotheistic element in the gīnāns. The cosmogony in the literature, on the other hand, draws substantially on Hindu ideas. The measure of time found in the Vedas, consisting of kalap, jug, etc., figures prominently.

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The present age is said to be the kaljug, the shortest and last of the four jugs, and more important, the hardest of them all, when adherence to religion is so difficult as to strain one's faith and strength to its utmost limits, for it is an epoch of godlessness. Satpanth is thus a synthesis of a variety of heterogenous ideas, all linked together and integrated into a single system.

The relationship to God in Satpanth Ismailism is one of intimate personal devotion, and is strikingly similar to the Sūfī conception of worship. That Sufism and Indian mysticism have a great deal in common is a well-known fact.[22] That Sūfī ideas have played an important part in the history of Islam in India is an even more significant fact on the basis of which controversial theories regarding the extent of the mutual influence of the two religions have been advanced. Again, the extent to which Sūfī orders and esoteric Islamic sects such as Ismailism influenced the rise of Bhakti sentiments, either directly or through eliciting a counter-response from Hinduism through their own popularity, is a most interesting historical problem. As far as Ismailism is concerned, all we can note here is that the works of the famous hymnodists of the 15th and 17th centuries,

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which are an epitome of Bhakti sentiments, contain certain basic elements which are strikingly similar to some of the major teachings of Indian Ismailism. For "these teachers, and many others like them in all parts of India, encouraged simple faith and devotion to a personal deity, disparaged exaggerated ritualism and caste pretensions and stressed brotherly love and fellowship ..... it is generally thought that Islamic ideas, mediated by Sūfī preachers, had some influence on this development. Kabir knew something of Islam, and according to tradition he was brought up as a Muslim. Nanak owes his insistence on the unity of God and his opposition to iconolatry to Islam, and the religion of Sikhism which he founded is clearly syncretistic."[23] Nevertheless, the problem of the exact nature and extent of the interaction of Ismailism (as apart from other Islamic sects and orders) with parallel movements in Indian mysticism is a difficult one to resolve, and it has been mentioned here primarily with a heuristic purpose in mind.

With all the reliance on Hindu mythology and cosmology, the attitude in the gīnāns towards idolatry is distinctly Islamic, resting on arguments whose main

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theme is that such worship springs from beliefs which are unreasonable. Note for instance the following verses in one of the garbīs:

"This day are our hearts full of joy. For the True Master (Satgur*) have we worshipped.
These idols and temples are shadows (literally, "ghosts", i.e. unreal), Why do you wander ceaselessly on this earth (in their worship).
Worship the light of the Satgur, He who is the Lord and Master."

And, further on:

"Dance night and day if you will. And yet you will attain nothing,
For all these stones (i.e. idols) are nothing but shadows, For they do not even speak!
Why do you forget that they were forged by men!
The god of the garbī is false (i.e. does not exist) Where is the goddess Bhavānī here?"[24]

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* Satgur can mean both "true teacher" or the "teacher of truth", and is used in the gīnāns in a sense equivalent to that of the Persian Pīr or Murshid.

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Again, it is in the same vein that Hindu beliefs concerning the sacredness of the River Ganges and other places of pilgrimage, are disparaged. For, if bathing in the holy river was the means to salvation, "fishes would also attain salvation".[25]

Apart from these direct arguments against selected features of indigenous belief, another interesting aspect of the preaching, as reflected in the gīnāns, is the attempt to make understanding of the new faith easier by the elimination of details alien to the converts. A most revealing instance of this is to be found in a gīnān by Pīr Hasan Kabīrdīn * where the Islamic story of Ibrahim being the son of an idolator is simplified by the Pīr's reference to him simply as the son of a Hindu.[26] Also, the substitution of specific gīnāns for certain Hindu hymns/and services is clearly aimed at facilitating

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* Note that in the rest of this thesis gīnāns attributed to specific Pīrs will be simply stated as their works, without going into finer historical problems of authorship - a task rewarding in its own right, but one that does not concern us here.

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the transition. The garbīs are a case in point.[27] The gīnān known as Ārtī was also probably meant to replace an equivalent Hindu service.[28]

Having thus noted the general characteristics of the gīnān literature in this brief section, we shall now go on to a detailed analysis of its contents. The discussion following below divides the material found in the gīnāns under general headings dealing with various topics. Naturally, the division is influenced by the analysis which is to follow in the later part of this thesis. To this extent, therefore, we are anticipating, for the headings under which we have divided the material in the gīnāns represent those aspects of the Ismaili world-view with which the change and development to be discussed later in this study are related.

The doctrine of the Imāmat

Owing to the esoteric nature of the belief in Imamat in Ismailism, and owing to the mystical veneration attached to the Imam, it is essential to examine the concept of God found in the gīnāns before the ideas concerning the Imāmat can be seen in perspective. God appears in the literature of the

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gīnāns as both transcendental, majestic and elusive to human understanding, as well as immanent, all-pervading and intimately loving. The following stanza embodies a typical synthesis of transcendence and immanence, for while He is beyond human likeness, the implication is that He can also be subjectively experienced:

"He is both aloof (i.e. beyond understanding) and
beyond sight,
And any conversation about him is also mysterious
(i.e. above ordinary understanding)
It is like a dumb man having a dream,
He alone understands it, lamenting to himself
(since he cannot communicate it to others)" [29]

On a different note, the universal, all-pervading quality of His being is also stressed. It is important to remember that in this context no distinction is drawn between God and the Imam. It is the esoteric belief in the Imam which makes him mystically one with and indistinguishable from the Divine Spirit. The Imam is not so much a person as the light that pervades existence:

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"My Lord dwells in every heart, filling it with
Himself. Do not consider him far, o ignorant
ones.
For the true believer, my Lord is present in every
breath, Like the pupil in the centre of the eye.
My Lord dwells in the three worlds, permeating
and saturating them all,
Like the scent abiding within the flower.
Just as the scent pervades the flower, so does
my Lord pervade the heart,
Do not consider him far, o ignorant ones.
Know my Lord as present in every heart.
Like the fat dissolved in the milk.
In every heart abides my Lord, nearer than the
hand.
He dwells in every heart, filling it with Himself."[30]

And, on the same note,

"Know that the Lord is present, And Wherever I
turn my sight, He alone I see.
So does my Lord dwell within every heart, Like
the sun risen against the sky.

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The sun rises against the sky, and fills the
dominion with light
So does my Lord abide in every heart, For wherever
I turn my sight, He alone I see.[31]

Holy is the name of the Lord, recite it with every
breath of yours.
Do not deem him far for He dwells within your
heart, Like the scent in the flower
My Lord dwells in every cell of mine. And there
is not a hairbreadth (devoid of him)
Understanding this, be devoted to Him, for the
Lord is resplendent in your heart."[32]

Thus, if the tendency in the gīnāns is towards a mystical, pantheistic concept of the divine, the idea that God becomes known through the Imam, who is an actual living person, is never overlooked:

"The Lord Islāmshāh reigns from the Takht (i.e.
throne, or seat of authority)
And watches over the faith
For this figure I searched through all the ages,
And found him at long last in this person."[33]

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The Imam, the direct descendent of Muhammad and ʿAlī and the expected manifestation of divine grace, is thus presented as the very life-spring of the new faith. In several gīnāns, one finds references to the town of Kahek, where the Imam was believed to be living.[34] Although it is difficult to establish when exactly the tradition of undertaking the long and perilous journey to Persia for the dīdār of the Imam came into being, it is obvious that such a practice stemmed from the central importance of the Imam in the new faith, as reflected in the gīnāns. Ivanow believes that it is quite possible that Imāmshāh himself travelled to Persia to see the Imam.[35] At any rate this became a fairly established practice at some point.[36] Again, one particular gīnān makes explicit reference to receiving a farmān or communication from the Imam.[37] One is therefore led to conjecture that from a very early stage in the history of the conversion, contact with the Imam in Persia was maintained, with a few able representatives from among the community making periodic journeys to Persia, to reinforce the link, which for them was the source and sustenance of their new faith. On the other hand,

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it can be said that for the ordinary convert in India, the Imam, though a living figure, was remote and inaccessible except through the pilgrims who had been to see him. But one of the important aspects of the gīnān-literature for our purpose in this study is to be found in the expectations of an actual advent of the Imam in India (Jampudīp, as it is called in the gīnāns), at the end of time, when it is said he will destroy evil and establish a golden era, a divine kingdom on earth.[38] Before closing this discussion of the doctrine of Imāmat in the gīnāns, it is important to note that the notion of a transcendent God and His manifestation through the Imam carried a specific religious attitude as its logical consequence. It introduced the idea of salvation through the blessings of the Imam, which could thus be attained through an ethic of stringent obedience. Perhaps nowhere else is this attitude summed up in so succinct a manner as in the following verses:

"O Lord, the green garden stays green and the scorched (place) turns green through thy gracious glance,

O Lord, the sweet nectar stays sweet and bitter poison turns sweet through thy blessings,

For the fruits of thy commands are nothing but sweet."[39]

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Eschatology

Those sections of the gīnān literature that deal with eschatological ideas illustrate most vividly the co-existence of Hinduistic and Islamic elements in Satpanth, and the tension created by their interaction. The doctrine of rebirth is retained and given an important place in the system, for the Pīrs continually rebuke the followers for "wandering" aimlessly within the cycle of birth and death. The futility of being re-born repeatedly into a meaningless existence is driven home now and again, the aim being clearly to rouse the devout follower into pursuing self-realization through mokṣh or muktī, i.e. liberation from the wheel of re-birth. On the other hand, the complacency liable to result from fatalistic resignation to sin and suffering as the result of deeds committed in a previous existence (a tendency inherent in the central concept of Karma in Hinduism) is forestalled by the possibility of salvation offered by the presence of the Imam and the Pīr. Perhaps it is the conspicuous absence of caste-dharma that has had its own contribution to make to the elimination of this fatalistic idea in Satpanth. On the other hand, the existence of ideas concerning the Day of Judgement

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has its own significant relevance to this stress on salvation through divine grace. While one particular gīnān refers explicitly to the Kiāmat (i.e. Qiyāma)[40] others speak of the commotion and disorder on the Last Day in terms vividly reminiscent of similar descriptions in the Qur'ān.[41] The concepts of heaven and hell recur frequently, and once again, have strong echoes of the Qur'anic descriptions, with elaborate imagery portraying the splendours of paradise on one hand[42], and the sometimes almost macabre images symbolizing the torments of hell. These descriptions are found side by side with Hindu cosmogonic conceptions.[43] Moreover, an anguished awareness of death, which destroys worldly comforts and pleasure, constitutes a powerful emotional force in the poetry of the gīnāns. There is an interesting gīnān by Pīr Sadardīn where this emotionally charged experience of the imminent threat of death is dramatized through a parable. The story runs as follows: A rich merchant sends out his agent, with appropriate instructions and words of wisdom, to carry out trade on his behalf. The agent, however, appropriates the goods to himself, leading a wanton and luxurious life, until one day he suddenly

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receives summons from the merchant; he thus finds himself compelled to return without being able to take his wares, his riches and his family, etc., with him. Important features of the poetry at this stage of the gīnān include a chiding tone in the rhetoric and an intensely pointed wit, the over-all purpose of which is to intensify the effect of the story. One can imagine that these poetic devices would have a profound effect upon the mind of the serious devotee, even though they may not be consciously noted. The allegory then shifts dramatically to the eschatological level, for the agent is seen as the "soul" whose record of good and bad deeds is laid open by the angels at the command of the merchant, who clearly stands for God.[44] Nothing could be more distinctly Islamic in spirit. On the whole, judging from the heterogeneity of ideas regarding after-life, it is safe to comment that the eschatological section of the gīnāns is perhaps the best instance of Islamic and indigenous Hindu beliefs juxtaposed against each other, though it should also be noted that these ideas do not clash overtly, and are tacitly assumed as part of a consistent set of beliefs.

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Ethics

A detailed examination of the ethical ideas contained in the gīnāns, and the kind of attitude they recommend towards the world-order is essential for the analysis in the later sections of this thesis, besides having an obvious value for comparative study of religious ethics. The potential conflict between a system of religious ethics on one hand and the economic and political order on the other, is one of the most potent sources of tension within such a system.[45] The way in which such tension is confronted and resolved depends upon the extent to which the system is either indifferent to or actively concerned with the world-order. The gīnāns exhibit a characteristic lack of concern with the political order, and to a less outstanding degree, with the economic order as well, and to this extent display an exclusively introspective temper. Consequently, the most striking feature of the ethical system in the gīnāns is the very general character of its teachings. The convert seeking concrete instructions or definite prescriptions which can be made a matter of regular routine is unlikely to find any such guidance in the

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gīnān-literature. For instance, one cannot help being struck by the very general nature of the ethical ideals contained in the following verses, and by the fact that no mention is made of any definite means whereby the devoted follower can incorporate these ideals into his daily life:

"Cultivate only the most sweet-tasting fruits in your garden,
And have love towards your brothers in your heart,
For indeed in the love of such a Lord of ours as this, is true beauty
And in the love of these brothers of ours is true beauty.
Exchange the gifts of your heart with the Lord after thinking deeply (over these matters)
For only he shall be able to reap, who is awake in his heart.
O you who have the Murshid as your guide, fetch the most priceless pearls,
For why should you make mistakes like those who have no Master?"[46]

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It is obvious that closely linked with this very general nature of the ethical teachings, is the mystical strand in the gīnāns. One result of this pronounced mystical element in the gīnāns is that intuition and subjective experience emerge as the primary criterion for ascertaining ethical merit and demerit. Thus it is inner experience rather than a legal code which becomes the guiding light in the ethical concerns of the devoted follower. The following stanza is an extreme example of this fundamental connection between subjective experience and ethical criteria:

" Drink in the Nūr and recite the Name with devotion,
And have love in your heart for the Zikr *
Recognize the Shāh and the Pīr
And so earn the immortal fruit." [47]

Even where specific ethics are enjoined, one finds no provision made for any mechanism for institutionalizing them in the society. Hence while they constitute the scale of values in the community, and as such are a

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* i.e. the dhikr of the Sūfīs

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very essential part of the faith, there are no organizational devices for translating them into a more concrete code of conduct. For instance, a gīnān by Pīr Shams entitled "The Fourteen Gems" enumerates fourteen such virtues to which the devoted follower should aspire in his personal life. They are: love for the Imam; remembering and preserving the knowledge imparted by the Pīr; complying with the "essence of religion"; humility, tolerance and kindness; service and obedience to the Murshid; deference to parents; charity to the wayfarer calling at the door; feeding the poor; having unflinching trust in Allah and Muhammad; observation of the three duās (i.e. the Ismaili prayer); considering only Allah and Muhammad as one's shelter and the source of one's hopes and faith; kindness to children; readiness to sacrifice oneself and one's possessions for the sake of the truth; and finally, fearing the Ākhrat or the life hereafter.[48]

It is thus obvious that while a pronounced stress is laid on values, there is no attempt to organize them in a definite order and thus lend them dogmatic support. Some other values governing relationships among the members of the community ought to be noted.

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Sexual intercourse outside marriage is severely condemned. The values governing ordinary family relationships are taken for granted as sacred. For, interestingly enough, a few gīnāns which embody visions of the upheaval and chaos at the end of time, speak of the weakening of such bonds as evidence of the godlessness engulfing society. To the Pīr it is indeed a most pernicious symptom of the inversion of social values at the end of times, and of the domination of evil, that the mother should abandon the child, that brothers should quarrel amongst themselves, that people should be disloyal to their secular king, that they should be untrue to their promises, etc.[49] For all these are virtues indispensible to "correct" social life. Indeed, love for each other becomes an important cornerstone of the ethics of the new faith, for the "mu'min is he who brings together those who have been severed".[50]

This brings us lastly to the question of the attitude towards the world-order, as illustrated in the gīnāns. The importance of the relationship between

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the position a religious system adopts vis-a-vis the world, and the ethical teachings contained in that system, is obvious. The specific importance of such a connection in the case of the Ismailis will be explored in the later sections of this study. The gīnāns look upon the world with a philosophical indifference, the logical end-product of which is an ascetic attitude. For the world is an ocean, from whose meaningless ebb and tide, and ceaseless drift of waves, the true believer strives to escape.[51] Death annihilates the pleasure of life, so that true meaning can only be found elsewhere. Worldly life is a dream, and its pleasures and comforts are no different, in essence, from the wistful delight of the sterile woman dreaming that she has conceived a child, or the wild joy of the poor man dreaming of himself as the owner of mansions and riches, or the rapture of the thirsty man in the desert on sighting the mirage.[52] Again, the antics of the individual during his short span of life on earth are no more real than those of an actor in the play.[53] Indeed, the idea that life is a stage-play forms the implicit nucleus of the attitude towards the world-order in the gīnāns.

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Basically, this attitude is related to the standpoint that the body and soul are alien to each other. The body is like a fragile pot of clay which will take no time to crumble to pieces, while the soul is non-material.[54] To use Max Weber's terminology, this attitude can be described more or less accurately by his concept of "world-rejecting asceticism", as opposed to "inner-worldly asceticism" (and it is important here to keep in mind Weber's insistence that the former is not identical with "flight from the world")[55]. On the other hand, it should also be borne in mind that the gīnāns reflect a disparaging attitude towards the traditional Indian hermit or "yogī".[56] Moreover, the aim of the true believer should be to transcend both the pleasures and pain of life, and not just to escape from its pain:

> "Know that pain and pleasure always visit us in this life,
> And they also leave us;
> But abandon never the true faith from the heart."[57]

And, on the same note:

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"The world is steeped in pleasure and pain,
And none knows the path to salvation.
But the Satgur says the true believer is he,
Who has detached himself from the pleasures
and pains of the world."

"Sever your heart from the joys and sorrows of
this life,
For the world is like a glow that blazes for
four days,
But the glow that emanates from the Lord
That radiance never vanishes from the heart."[58]

Ideas concerning religious experience

Examination of the nature of religious experience in Satpanth is a necessary and rewarding task in several ways. In the first place, it should obviously be included as an indispensable section in any detailed study of the religious philosophy in the gīnāns, because of the importance assigned in it to personal experience of the divine. It also throws light on the type of ethical adaptation to the world allowed and encouraged by the system, for this is determined to a large extent by the goal towards which

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the devotee is expected to strive, and which vindicates his religious aspirations. It also provides the student of Ismailism with a valuable tool in the exploration of the historical origin and sources of Satpanth. Being an integral part of the total doctrinal system, it helps to throw into perspective the rest of the elements in the ideation. And for the same reason, it is also important in its bearing on later-day developments. For the moment, we shall be content with seeking to understand the type of religious consciousness which constitutes the main emotional force in the poetry of the gīnāns. Not until a later stage in this discussion shall we touch on the historical importance of ideas regarding religious experience in this phase of Ismailism, and their relevance to the non-religious domains of life.

The ultimate goal or climax of the spiritual life of the believers as portrayed in the gīnāns, is the dīdār or vision of the divine. This is the same as the dīdār of the Imam, for it is an inner, mystical vision, and is far from being conceived of in anthropomorphic terms. The predominant stress on

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such an experience is the logical and inevitable result of several standpoints peculiar to Indian Ismailism. Firstly, a prevailing theme in the gīnāns is the stress on the "inner" as opposed to the "outer" forms of religious life. This, indeed, had been a strongly characteristic feature of Ismailism since its emergence. Indeed, the general tendency to emphasize the bāṭin as opposed to the ẓāhir remained the prominent hall-mark of Ismailism through all its historical variations. In the gīnāns, exterior symbols of faith are re-interpreted in a manner pointing towards interior aspects of the religious life, thus shifting the emphasis:

> "The Hindu does not know my Lord, nor does the Musalmān
> For my Lord is beyond sight.
> My heart is the musallā, and Allah, my kāzi (i.e. qāḍī)
> My body is my Masjid.
> I say the namāz (i.e. ṣalāt) thus enshrined,
> How can the foolish one understand my (form of) worship."[59]

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Similarly, in To Munīvarbhāi, the Pīr, after scoffing at circumcision and the practice of reciting the Kalimā "a hundred times" without the appropriate spiritual attitude[60], goes on to define circumcision in a manner typical of Indian Ismailism:

> "Who is the Musalmān in the present age
> Listen to my thoughts on that matter,
> The one who performs the five forms of
> circumcision,
> He alone is the Musalmān brother in faith today."[61]

The five forms of circumcision of course are abstaining from foul speech, refraining from prohibited sexual intercourse, seeing the one reality everywhere and not coveting evil, refusing to hear slander and abuse of others, and refraining from striking anyone or going to places of evil repute.[62]

In other gīnāns, the conventional symbols and objects adopted by the Indian Yogī are interpreted in the same spirit.[63]

The same insistence on subjective experience as the goal of religious life is also the end-product of another important standpoint in the gīnāns, viz.the

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distrust of dogma and of philosophy and intellectualism:

> "One who learns, hears and knows, but knows not the mystery thereof (is like the one) who says the namāz without the kalimā. O, how can the body exist without the head?"[64]

A logical corollary of this is that practical conformity with the faith is more important than scholastic knowledge. And in the language of the gīnāns, practic al conformity implies an emotional attitude of constant love for the divine.[65] The result of this approach, therefore, is an attitude of intense and passionate yearning for nearness to the divine being, and a longing to be united with Him. One finds in the gīnāns a great many verses which speak of the pain of separation from God, who is simply addressed in these verses as "the beloved". In this, indeed, the gīnāns sound remarkably similar to the lyrics of the Persian Sūfīs. An interesting, literary feature about this aspect of the gīnāns is the imagery employed in order to evoke the appropriate state of mind. The most frequently used images conveying the

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relationship between the loving devotee and God, are those of the fish and water, the moth and the lamp, the child and the mother, etc. The prevailing mood is one of painful incompleteness arising out of consciousness of separation from God, and the longing to be united with the divine source. The pain felt at the separation is conveyed in images charged with a singular intensity:

> A fire blazes incessantly at the core of my heart, O my beloved,
> And you alone can extinguish it. [66]

In such verses, the poetic effect is heightened by the fact that the imagery is couched in phrases which are intense and compressed, and intense <u>because</u> they are compressed. In other places, the imagery is more vivid and elaborate, as in the following gīnān by Pīr Hasan Kabīrdīn:

> Lying on a bed of nails, I cannot shut my eyes in sleep,
> When I see you, my beloved, on every leaf above, chiding at my pining soul.

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So said the Nabī to the Lord, Do not remove thyself
a whit from me
For when the agony at Thy separation shall surge
within my breast,
Thee alone will I wish to see."[67]

Similarly, in the Satvenī Motī, a voluminous single gīnān with a protracted mystical theme, the author struggles to find a means of expression that is true to the experience itself. The imagery here is repetitive, forceful, and volcanic:

"Behold this joy of love for the beloved, it
kindles a fire consuming the whole being.
Now and again it engulfs the heart in all
directions, just as the wick in the lamp
shrivels in the flame,
Nor does it subside even for a moment, for its
flames permeate every cell of the being
Though the seven heavens rain a mighty torrent,
this (fire) surges upward.
Know that the true flames are those of love for
your Lord, Let not a single cell of thy being
be spared of it."[68]

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As in Sufism, the Divine Being is sought after as the object of all one's desires and hopes. The actual moment of encounter with the "Other" is experienced as a dialogue between the ego and the Divine,[69] or as the beloved who eludes the lover and baffles his understanding by his majesty and greatness, etc.[70]

Perhaps the most detaile and valuable account of the mystical ideas in Indian Ismailism is to be found in Buj Niranjan, a very large single gīnān describing the mystical states (hāl), and drawing upon a rich variety of Sūfī concepts. The opening lines of the gīnān convey a characteristic fascination with the idea of the person of the Creator:

"Let me unfold to you a tale of untold mystery.
So that the journey to our destination is made easier.
How did the hidden Lord become manifest (through His creation)?
Tall me what disguise did He adopt.
His zāt *1 came forth from Lā *2
Whose wonder surpasses all speech.

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*1 i.e. "essence" cf. dhat in Arabic

*2 i.e. "No", here taken to mean "infinity"

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Even though the Pīr and the Paygambar * dive
deep again and again,
Yet never can they fathom this great mystery.
For it is a vast fathomless ocean,
Whose vastness knows no bounds.
If you dive into this infinite ocean,
And die while you are alive, you will come back
with priceless pearls.
If you abandon your life by diving into it
again and again,
At long last you will attain something from it."[71]

Finally, it must be noted that meditation, or recitation of the dhikr, is the chief means to spiritual experience in the gīnāns. The dhikr is often simply spoken of in the gīnāns as the "Name" or the "Divine Name". It is in the early hours of the morning that the devoted follower is urged to concentrate on the Divine Essence, and several gīnāns appeal to the devotee to wake up at this time and seek contact with the divine light through the appropriate mental alertness.[72] The purpose of the meditation is to effect a spiritual withdrawal from the world, and thus to enter a new life,

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* i.e. "Prophet"

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when the Formless and the world of forms (i.e. the creation) are realized as One.[73] The realization comes through the unfolding of an inner capacity for spiritual vision.[74] It is then that the idea of oneness contained in the confession, "La illaha illa llah" is reinforced through subjective experience. For all consciousness of form and duality is eliminated at this stage.[75] Utter humility before God is the first requirement in the process.[76] The Murshid is indispensible, because the tarīkat, i.e. the way to the destination, is overshadowed by absolute darkness or zulmāt . With the help of the Murshid, the aspiring follower learns to rise above the Shariyat and is led through the stages of tarīkat and hakīkat to the final goal of mārifat * or gnosis.[77] The Divine Name is the form through which the Divine Essence becomes accessible to one's inner perception, for it is by reciting the name that the bearer of the name becomes manifest.[78] Thus the name is a symbol through which access to the Infinite Spirit is gained. It is in fact the Infinite Spirit.[79] Through its fusion with the consciousness, the individual ego finds itself merged with the Divine Spirit, when the distinction between "I" and "Thou" disappears.[80] The result

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* These terms are spelt here as they are in the gīnāns. Note, however, that they are also key-concepts in Sufism.

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is the annihilation of individual identity, like the merging of the stream into the ocean, or the saturation of soft clay with water.[81]

Ritual

It is inevitable that the over-riding importance of the mystical element in Indian Ismailism should influence the system of rites in the faith. The stress on the inner, as opposed to the outer aspects of religious life, and the distrust of scholasticism were probably the chief reasons for the absence of a formal dogma or creed. One particular gīnān defines the faithful simply as "one who has embraced the Nūr"[82]. There is thus no equivalent of the articles of faith or the pillars (arkān) of Islam in Indian Ismailism. The gīnāns make no reference to any specific creed to which the aspiring convert is expected to subscribe, nor is there any mention of specific rites marking conversion. Interestingly enough, however, there are several isolated references to congregational worship. Khojā tradition ascribes to Pīr Sadardīn the authorship of the first duā or prayer recited in congregation. Another, though less well-known tradition attributes the composition of the duā to one

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Saiyad Dādu, who is said to have preached among the Khojās in Sindh, Kutch and Kathiavar in the 16th century.[83] There are also a few references to dasond or tribute to the Imam, which was probably collected locally and perhaps occasionally remitted to the Imam by pilgrims.[84] A very important point about Indian Ismailism which should be noted here is that there is no equivalent of the Sharī'a in the gīnāns. Presumably, the converts were allowed to retain their indigenous rites of passage, though, owing to the dearth of evidence on this point, the student of Ismailism finds himself in the position of being able to offer no more than the most tentative hypothesis in such matters.

Apart from this, the practice of communal drinking of sacred water deserves mention. Several gīnāns contain references to such a ceremony.[85] On the other hand, it must be noted that the poetic style and the widespread use of metaphor in the gīnāns makes it difficult for the student to ascertain the exact details of such a practice. The statement in one of the gīnāns urging the mu'min to partake of the amī or "nectar" is a case in point.[86] For it is

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impossible to establish with any certainty or conclusiveness whether the reference is to actual drinking of sacred water, or whether the statement is intended in a purely metaphorical sense. Nevertheless, it seems safe to infer, on the basis of several such references, that such a ceremony actually existed in Satpanth, no matter what spiritual interpretation was added to it in keeping with the general tendency towards metaphorical expression in the poetry of the gīnāns.

Religious Organization

The historical study of Indian Ismailism would be incomplete if it did not take into account the type of organization which linked the converts with each other, the extent to which they were organized into a definite group, and consequently, the degree to which they acquired a distinct identity. It is interesting to note that apart from the important position of the Pīr, there was no provision in Satpanth for a priestly class. The idea of aloneness before God, and the ultimate futility of kinship ties was clearly designed to promote personal intensity and ardour in faith.[87]

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One particular gīnān places loyalty to faith above loyalty to family connections, for it exhorts the follower to spurn close ties if they prove hostile to the faith.[88] On the other hand, we have already seen that one aspect of the Pīr's vision of the chaos at the end of time, as embodied in the gīnāns, consists in the belief that the defiance of family and social bonds will indicate the prevailing godlessness.[89] There is no doubt that there was some attempt at laying down rudimentary elements of organization, thus establishing a pattern different from the amorphousness of most Hindu forms of worship and thereby lending a certain identity to the new group, at an early phase in the history of the movement. Khojā tradition ascribes such an attempt to Pīr Sadardīn, for he is credited with the establishment of several jamātkhānās with Mukhīs.[90] A particular gīnān by Pīr Shams contains an account of the conversion of a group of Hindus at some place in Bengal, and speaks of the appointment of a Mukhī as well as a district head for the Ismailis, named Vasta, which, not being a Hindu name, has probably something to do with the Arabic wāsiṭa, meaning "connecting link".[91]

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A historical analysis of such events is not our task here, but their implications for the religious and social life of the Khojā Ismailis is important. The gat, meaning congregation, became an additional and important feature of the new system. Believers were urged to attend its meetings.[92] It was also given a mystical significance as a corporate entity, for it embodied the presence of the divine light and through its mystical power, the believer could be liberated from his sins.[93]

Before closing this discussion of the contents of the gīnāns, it is useful to examine the subject from the point of view of certain theoretical angles, so that the material, thus analysed, could be employed within the interpretative outline to be used in the following chapters for the study of latter-day developments and changes. The classic study of the influence of religious ideas on the secular order, and in particular its economic ethics, is that of Max Weber, who, beside examining at great length the relationship between religious ideas and other social phenomena, devoted special attention to the role of the Protestant ethic in the rise of western capitalism.[94]

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It is with the first, i.e. the more general of his studies with which we are concerned here. The Ismaili Pīrs responsible for the establishment of Satpanth can be characterized as "prophets" in the sense in which Weber employs the term. He defines the prophet as a "purely individual bearer of charisma, who by virtue of his mission proclaims a religious doctrine or divine commandment."[95] This analytic application of the term is useful in so far as it enables us to interpret the nature of the conversion process, the content of the new doctrine and the course of events following the conversion, in terms of Weber's scheme of analysis in which the concept of the prophet as the prototype of charismatic leadership has an important place. Further on, Weber makes an interesting distinction between two types of prophecy, which he calls the "ethical" and the "exemplary" forms of prophecy, respectively. The "ethical prophet", conceiving of himself as the instrument of God's will, "demands obedience as an ethical duty", while the exemplary prophet, by his personal example, presents himself as a model of ideal behaviour, thus inviting others to tread in his footsteps. Weber considered most of the Indian teachers of salvation as representative of the second type, while the first type

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included such prophets as Muhammad and Zoroaster.[96] While on one hand the historic role of the Ismaili Pīrs was obviously similar to the exemplary type of prophets, one is also compelled to acknowledge a substantial ethical element in their teachings. For, after all, the Pīrs are not so much to be followed in their personal example but obeyed in respect of the doctrine they proclaim. The Islamic idea of a transcendental God introduced a strongly "ethical" element in the conception of the supernatural order in the new faith. Hence it was the Islamic factor in the symbiosis that was responsible for the concept of the "personal, transcendental and ethical god", thus providing a different doctrinal motif from that found in extreme types of Hinduism in which, as Weber observes, there is no such concept.[97] Consequently, the idea of the supreme domination of an impersonal and eternal order over the world (an order to which even the gods are subject), which Weber observed to be the distinctive hallmark of Hinduism,[98] is largely lacking in Satpanth. The fatalism which could ensue as a logical result of such a concept is forestalled by the idea that salvation could be obtained through obedience to the commandments of the Imam. On the

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other hand, it is also important to note that by way of such ideas as those concerning the advent of the saviour at the end of time, Satpanth made concessions to the popular form of religion usually found in disprivileged strata. That any religion which spreads to the masses has to take into account elements of belief indigenous to the laiety is a widely recognized fact. Moreover, as Weber pointed out, such elements usually contain magical ideas, and these can be found in the stories of miracles in certain sections of Khojā tradition concerning Satpanth.[99] Exactly how and when these stories came into circulation is unknown, and a historical investigation of what can aptly be termed the "dark ages" of Satpanth, i.e. the long period between the original conversion and the migration of the Imam Hasan'alīshāh to Bombay, would have the greatest value in bridging one of the most tantalizing lacunae in the history of Satpanth Ismailism.

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Chapter III

The Quest for a New Social Identity I

Having discussed the history of the beginnings and subsequent development of Satpanth Ismailism in the Indo-Pak subcontinent, we shall now resume the historical account of the Ismailis at a point which is more directly relevant to the special interest of this study, namely the expansion of the Ismaili community in East Africa. In order to understand the East African developments fully, it is necessary to take full account of some events of decisive importance which took place as a result of the migration of the Imam Hasan ʿalīshāh (the Aga Khan I), the forty-sixth Imam in the Ismaili tradition, to India, in the middle of the nineteenth century. The most important of these events was the so-called Khojā Case of 1866, when the authority of the Imam was challenged in the Bombay High Court. Since significant numbers of Ismailis had settled in East Africa (mainly on the island of Zanzibar) by this time, the court-case had far-reaching consequences on their social organization and belief system. This was all the more so by virtue of the fact that the centralized authority of

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the Imam had the effect of linking the various Ismaili communities throughout the world at a substantial level of their religious and social awareness. Owing to these reasons, the history of the social process consisting of changes in organization and modifications in certain aspects of the doctrinal system of the communities in East Africa cannot be considered in isolation from the court case of 1866 and other closely related events. For these developments had a far-reaching impact on the collective consciousness of the various Khojā Ismaili communities throughout the world. In this chapter, therefore, we shall discuss in some detail the social dynamics of the conflicts, which were one of the consequences of the Imam Hasan ʿalīshāh's migration to India, and the reaction of the conforming Ismailis to these conflicts. In the next chapter, we shall proceed to trace in detail the initial effects of these incidents on the East African Ismaili communities, and the subsequent developments which emerged on the basis of the resolution of the earlier difficulties and conflicts. First of all, however, it is essential to say a few words in order to clarify the general framework of analysis within which we are going to examine the developments to be described in this chapter and the next.

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In considering the changes in the social system of the Ismailis from the time of the Imāmat of the Aga Khan I onwards, we shall assume a dialectical relationship between the religious ideation and the social processes in question. Thus, far from dismissing the changes in the doctrinal system of the Ismailis as a mere reflection of the social changes, and far from taking the opposite approach of considering the social changes as a mere product of the religious developments, we shall take the view that each of these two sets of changes had repercussions on the other. The ideational group of these changes will not be considered in detail except in a later chapter. As is suggested by the titles of these two chapters, most of these changes can be viewed collectively as part of the quest for a social identity, and part of the changing nature of this identity in response to various influences of the social environment. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that owing to the complexity of the structure of the Ismaili society, the dynamics of change and continuity take place at more than one level. Here we will be concerned with those changes which took place at an organizational level, in other words, the relatively formal and directly observable level (which would include the

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constitutional set-up as well). Whether these changes were accompanied by any change at the more structural and intangible level is a consideration that we shall put off until towards the end of this thesis. Moreover, it should be noted that the changes to be described in this chapter and the next took place within a dual frame of reference. They were part of a changing identity in relation to the non-Ismaili groups that constituted the social environment in which the Ismailis found themselves living, and they were also part of a changing shape of internal organization. Indeed, these are but two aspects of a single phenomenon. The posture that a society adopts in relation to the world around it is partly determined by, and in turn determines, its self-view. In a highly organized society such as the Ismailis, the organization assumes the function of partially articulating this self-view. In its turn, the internal organization may have its own modifying effects, however slight, on the total self-view of the society. Furthermore, that facet of the social identity which is realized through the society's relationship to the other groups that constitute the world around it, can itself be broken into two parts.

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One element in the relationship of a society to its social environment is to be found in its attempt at establishing a working relationship with the groups with which it finds it necessary or desirable to do so, while the other element in this relationship lies in the attempt on the part of the society to establish a distinctive identity vis-a-vis these other groups, thus consolidating itself as a separate group in its own right. Once again, these two processes are only two different aspects of the total momentum of the group towards a realization of its essential vision through reaching out towards forms of identity that would best enable it to come to terms with its social environment. To sum up the argument thus far, we shall be concerned in this chapter and the next, with dialectical processes in two different dimensions. On one plane, we will be examining the reciprocal relationship between the ideational and the social changes among the Ismailis since the time of the Aga Khan I. On another plane, we will devote our attention to examining the relationship between the total response adopted by the Ismaili society to other non-Ismaili societies with which it had dealings, and the internal organization which, with the passage of years, emerged as the most striking feature of the society.

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All these processes constituted a single quest which forms the quintessence of the changes and developments over the period with which we are concerned — the quest for a more secure and viable social identity.

An essential feature of the Khoja Ismaili community in India at the time when the Imam Hasan'alishah migrated there was the absence of a formal, constitutionally defined identity. This factor was responsible for a certain amorphousness in dogma, ritual, and, therefore, in the social identity as a whole. There were several reasons for this relatively confused identity: (1) The long-established and, therefore, firmly ingrained principle of taqiyya, and the consequent tendency to adopt alien customs and rites. (2) The very nature of Satpanth religion, which was a symbiotic combination of elements from Sūfī Islam and Hinduism. (3) The personal absence of the Imam. (4) The place of Muslim communities in the caste structure of Indian society. (5) The absence of a clearly defined set of dogmas and rites, and (6) the absence of constitutional recognition. We shall examine each of these factors briefly.

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(1) The practice of taqiyya

Strictly speaking, taqiyya is a technical term standing for the principle of "dispensation from the requirements of religion under compulsion or threat of injury".[1] In the Khoja Case, however, it was used in a broader sense to denote the practice of adopting non-Ismaili rites and customs in connection with institutions like marriage. Although the principle of taqiyya is by no means confined to the Shī'a,[2] it was with them that it became a particularly burning issue. For long history of persecution and the psychological state induced by the constant apprehension of some unannounced danger lurking round the corner, as it were, was responsible in the Shī'a minorities for a temperament especially conducive to the wide-spread practice of concealing their beliefs. Among the Khojā Ismailis, therefore, it is not surprising that the historical legacy of persecution and the temperament associated with it would contribute to the tendency on the part of the community to adopt customs and rites which were not strictly Ismaili or Shi'ite. The Chief Justice presiding over the Khojā Case observed that taqiyya had almost become a "second nature" to the Ismailis.[3] The validity of this so emphatic

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a statement is debatable, for, as we shall see, there were a number of factors beside the observation of taqiyya which had bearings on the characteristic ambiguity in religious practices among the Khojās in that period in their history. It is nevertheless reasonable to suppose that the tendency on the part of the Khojās to observe Sunnī customs was in all probability a result of the general predisposition, under the threat of necessity, to adopt what from the outside observer's point of view may appear as alien customs. This tendency on the part of the Khojā Ismailis to observe divergent sets of practices some of which belonged to non-Ismaili religious groups, a tendency which can perhaps be described as "plural belonging", was a sure indication of the fact that the Ismailis had not yet become a sufficiently distinct community with fixed beliefs, rites and norms. In other words, though they were a markedly distinct congregation, they had not formally defined their doctrines and rites, nor had they yet sifted essentially those practices which could be unmistakably termed "Ismaili", from those which were of more doubtful origin or even obviously derived from other sects.

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At any rate, it was in connection with such rites as marriages or funerals that Sunnī practices were generally observed. Marriages were officiated by Sunni qāḍīs. The fact that the latter regularly and carefully kept registers of marriages presided over by them - a fact which was of considerable importance in the matter of legal proof of marriage - might have been an additional reason for the Khojās' preference for their marriage rites to be performed by Sunnī mullās. In the case of funeral rites, the fact that the Khojās had no mullās of their own and that the Shī'a mullās were few and were not always easily available, could be an additional reason why the Ismailis were forced to resort to Sunnī qāḍīs.[4] Indeed, in order to ensure facilities for the regular performance of funeral rites, a Sunnī mosque had been built in the Khojā burial ground in Bombay in 1822, with a Sunnī mullā appointed to officiate over the appropriate Islamic prayers.[5] A point of major importance that should be noted in this connection is that beside the possible influence of the historical tendency towards taqiyya on the part of the Shī'as, the fact that certain sections of Ismaili funeral rites are identical with the corresponding Sunnī rites (such as the Fāṭiha, for instance) could have been

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yet another reason why the Ismailis perhaps saw no anomaly whatsoever in such rites being performed by a Sunnī official.

(2) The symbiotic nature of Satpanth Ismailism.

We have seen in the previous chapter that the essential character of Satpanth Ismailism is eclectic. This led to the existence in the community of a variety of practices, a situation which was potentially liable to lead to ambiguities and confusion. The fact that the Islamic element in the faith was represented by Sūfī ideas, a body of thought in Islam whose central characteristic from the point of view of its social structure was its diffuseness or amorphousness, was an additional factor making for a potential source of ambiguity.

(3) The personal absence of the Imam.

Though periodical contact with the Imam (who was resident in Iran) was maintained through representatives of various communities in India who travelled to Iran to have the Imam's dīdār and to pay him tributes, the fact that the Imam was a physically remote figure for the mass of the followers in India prevented the

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emergence of a centralized structure with institutionalized authority. A Khojā author mentions the existence of vakīls or agents of the Imam [6], but it is obvious that their role, apart from collecting tributes and acting as a link between the Imam and the communities in India, was vague and of little decisive consequence as far as organization was concerned. Thus it was not until the Imam Hasan ʿalīshāh arrived in India that his authority was enforced directly and personally with a consequent increase in the cohesiveness of those of his followers who stood by him.

(4) The place of Muslim communities in the Indian traditional social structure

The classification of Indian societies into castes (varna) and caste-groups (jati) is all-encompassing. Hence, even Muslim communities were called by names based not always on their belief-system but on the caste-group to which they belonged. Thus the Punjabi Kashmiri, and other groups of Ismailis were all known separately. It was not until the authority of the Imam had been firmly established and extended over all the communities who, originally converted by the Pīrs, acknowledged the Imāmat, that the various groups in question asserted their Islamic beliefs more openly and collectively, and hence came to be united into a single "Ismaili" society.

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(5) The absence of a clearly defined set of dogmas and rites

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the central concern of the gīnāns was a mystical one. There was no attempt towards the formulation of a creed. Rites and customs were considered to be of a superficial and purely subordinate importance, and were therefore left to the discretion of the followers. There was no consistent attempt at laying down a binding or distinctly ordered set of religious rites.

(6) The absence of a constitutional definition.

Not until the conflicts in the community culminated in the 1866 court-case, were the distinctive tenets of the Ismailis recognized by a High Court as constituting a body of doctrines sufficiently distinct and precise as to mark out the Khojā Ismailis as a separate sect.

Having noted the chief factors which were responsible for a state in which the true identity of the Khojā Ismailis was liable to be challenged owing to the existence in their community of a variety of alien religious practices, we shall now go on to consider in detail the migration of Imam Hasan ʿalīshāh

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to India, and the subsequent history of dissent in the community.

Muhammad Husayn Husayni, otherwise known as Hasan alishah, was the forty-sixth Imam in the Ismaili tradition. His father, the Imam Khalilullah, was murdered in 1818 in a local skirmish. The then Shah of Persia, Fath Ali Shah Qajar (1798-1834) was alarmed at the possible consequences of the murder, and fearing grave reprisals from the fanatically loyal Ismaili followers of the Imam, bestowed favours upon the new Imam, conferring upon him the governorship of the provinces of Mahellat and Qum, and marrying him to his own daughter. The new Imam had the pet name "Aga Khan" in the court of the Shah, which was later adapted as a hereditary title. He thus came to be known as the Aga Khan I, although as Imam he was considered by his followers to be the forty-sixth holder of the masnad of Imamat since ʿAlī, the first Imam of the Shīʿas. In 1837 the Imam, having made a deadly enemy of Haji Mirza Aghasi, the Prime Minister and one of the most powerful men in the country, rose in arms against Muhammad Ali Shah Qajar, who was then the Shah of Persia. The exact nature of the hostility between the Aga Khan I and Haji Mirza Aghasi is not clear and need not detain us here.

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At any rate, after putting up a formidable fight, he was overcome by the king's forces and was compelled to retreat. Escaping from Persia, he took refuge with the British at Qandahar. He also rendered military assistance to the British in quelling the revolt raised by the native tribes at Kabul. Furthermore, he used his influence to pacify the militant mirs who were hostile to the British forces. In 1842, the Imam arrived at Sindh, where again his military prowess and war-like character were of help to Sir Charles Napier, the British governor, especially in the wars of Miani and Dubba in 1843. In 1843, Hasan ʿalīshāh reached Calcutta and finally settled in Bombay in 1848, where he was received with considerable reverence by the majority of his followers.

The Imam's arrival, however, also set into motion a process of dissension in certain sections of the community. The element of vaguesness in certain areas of religious expression in the community which we have already discussed above, proved fertile grounds for this dissent. This dissatisfaction later developed into a movement with periodical, albeit sporadic and irregular, secessions from the main body of followers. It is extremely important to stress, however, that against the amorphousness and

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confusion in various aspects of the religious and social life of the Khojās, especially in matters of marriage and funeral rites, there was a very striking and unbroken continuity in certain more fundamental issues which were decisive for the identity of the community. Thus, for instance, as witness after witness during the course of the Khojā case confirmed, "from all time our fathers used to go on pilgrimage to Durkhana" (i.e. the residence of the Imam). [7] These periodical journeys by local groups of followers from the Indian subcontinent to Persia, under conditions which at the least can be termed hazardous, are a vivid reflection of the deep sentiments of loyalty binding the Ismailis to their Imams from the earliest times. Moreover, these pilgrimages, organized more or less regularly "from the earliest times of their existence as a separate community"[8], demonstrate the clearly delineated identity of the Khojās as a body of followers owing allegiance to the Ismaili Imams. The intense veneration with which the Ismailis looked up to their Imams was a reflection of the Sufistic notions of the relationship between the Imam and his followers in Ismaili philosopny. The Khojā Case also established the fact "that, 'for a time beyond which the memory of man runneth not to the contrary' -

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from the origin - from the very outset of their separate existence as a distinctive community - the Khojas have been in the habit of transmitting as to their 'Sirkar Sahib'(lord and master), voluntary offerings (Zakat) out of religious feelings (Dharm) to the Imam for the time being of the Ismailis, whom they revered as their Murshed or spiritual head"[9]. This, together with the fact that the Khojā Ismailis had since the earliest times their own separate places of worship, the jamātkhānās, with a Mukhī and Kāmariā as presiding officers, and, above all, the fact that the community always had as their religious literature the duā (prayer) and the gīnāns, prove beyond doubt that the identity of the Khojās had been fundamentally distinct. In the light of this, one may wonder how it was at all possible for confusion and disagreement to arise over the precise character and implications of the beliefs of the Khojās. One may also wonder how it was possible for the dissenting party in the Khojā case to challenge the fundamental principles of Khojā Ismaili faith when these very principles were so exclusively confined to Ismailism and so characteristic of it as to render any mistake concerning their true nature impossible.

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The answer to these questions lies in considering the concept of "social identity", in its application to the Ismailis of this period, on two levels. These two levels could best be termed "formal" and "informal". The term "formal" is meant here in a strict and narrow sense to stand for the official or public sector of opinion. The term "informal" is used here to embrace all those distinctive tenets which set the Khojās apart from other religious groups, but had neither yet been defined in a final or constitutional manner, nor had the authority of constitutionally enforceable sanctions. Given this intrinsically weak situation, and given the important ambiguities in certain areas of social and religious behaviour, antagonistic parties were bound to utilize these factors to find ideological support for social conflicts which erupted among themselves from time to time.

It should be noted that the history of the various secessions that took place whenever the conflicts in the community came to a head shows that the issues which centered in the conflicts were far from constituting a single or systematic ideological protest. Whatever ideological points of contention

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were brought into the foreground seem to have been secondary to the spirit of mutual animosity which was the essential driving force in such conflicts. On the whole, the protests were the expression of discontent in a small minority of the community, and the sole drive which enabled them to sustain the hostility for a reasonably long time was their antipathy for the rest of the community and its leaders, and their resistance to Imam Hasan'alīshāh's authority, together with the refusal to pay him the customary dues. This last factor deserves special note, for it was a prominent issue in the quarrel. The amount of money payable to the Imam could in all probability be enormous, and it is not unlikely that the local heads of the community resorted to intimidating action if a few individual members of the community resisted the demand. One is therefore led to conclude that the real driving force in the quarrel consisted of a social conflict in which the heavy tributes that the members of the community were expected to pay to the Imam was a special cause for resentment on the part of the protesting group. On the other hand, the fact that the Khojā Ismailis observed Sunnī rites in marriages and funerals, - and this situation provided, as we have seen, a breeding ground for disputes concerning the true nature of Khojā beliefs - became the actual point of contention. If, however, the

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whole series of conflicts (including the court-case of 1905, which we shall discuss further below) is examined, one finds that the ideological points of contention during some phases in the history of the dissent differed radically from those which were put forward during other phases in the same general movement. What is important to note is that in the series of events leading up to the court-case of 1866, one can discern a general preoccupation with the question as to what precisely was the status of the Khojās on account of the prevalence in the community of the Sunnī customs already mentioned above.

The High-Court case of 1866 dwelt only upon the clashes between a dissenting minority in Bombay on one hand and the bulk of the community, headed by the Imam on the other. It was certainly in Bombay that these differences were articulated and expressed with far-reaching effects. But some Ismaili texts also record similar disputes in Kutch. It is related that when the East India Company was exercising authority in Kutch, a certain vakīl or agent of the Imam dissociated himself from the main body of followers, drawing a small minority in his support.

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It is significant that the dissenting party's demand is said to have been to the effect that the shrine of Saiyad Dādu (a Khojā reformer saint believed to have been sent to Sindh and Kutch in the 16th century [10]) should be enclosed within the Sunnī burial ground. They also allied themselves with a group of Sunnīs. However, another leading figure in the community, on behalf of the rest of the members, protested to the British authorities and prevented the shrine from being annexed by the Sunnīs.[11] Several decades later, however, there seems to have been a recurrence of conflict when one Umedali, a vakīl from the Khoja community in Kutch who had risen to a position of influence in the court of the local maharajah (the jurisdiction of the East India Company over Kutch had by then been annulled) set up a counter-claim against the rest of the community. The exact details of the dispute are unknown. As a result of the conflict, the Imam is said to have sent his nephew, Muhammad Jafarkhan, to Kutch to settle the quarrel. On Umedalis resisting the Imam's nephew, the Imam sought the support of the British Political Agent at Kutch and forced Umedali to give up the communal property that he is alleged by an Ismaili writer to have annexed.[12]

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The events at Kutch depict an ideological pattern of protest that seems closely related to that involved in the conflicts in Bombay where the main part of the battle was fought. In 1829 a group of Khojās headed by one Habib Ibrahim resisted the payment of dasond or the conventional tribute to the Imam. This was a symbolic defiance of the Imam's authority and in order to counteract the opposition and prevent it from extending, the Imam sent one Mirza Abdul Kassam as his special agent, together with his maternal grandmother who, incidentally, was revered in the old duā of the Khojas as Pīr, her name appearing there as Pīr Sarkār Mātā Salāmat. She is said to have preached forcefully in the Khoja jamātkhānās in Bombay.[13] In 1830 the Khojās assembled in the jamātkhānā and by common consent excommunicated Habib Ibrahim and his party. However, in 1835, on relenting and paying the dues they had resisted in the first instance, Habib Ibrahim and his supporters were re-admitted into the community.[14]

In 1846 a case was filed in the Bombay Supreme Court as a result of a dispute over the regulations governing the rights of Khojā women to inherit property. The nature of the dispute and the reactions of both parties concerned provides interesting and valuable insight into the fundamental changes affecting the

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social identity of the Khojās at this period in their history. The plaintiffs in the case were two sisters whose father's property, after his death, had passed into the hands of his brother. The latter, upon his death, left a will in which he appointed his widow and one of his nieces trustees of the property he left behind him. Thereupon the two sisters filed a suit in the Supreme Court claiming that as the Khojās were Muslims, they had a right, in accordance with Muslim law, to inherit the property their father had originally left behind. It is at once clear that the nature of the contention raised issues which were of grave significance for the social identity of the Khojās. The religion which had been handed down to them from their forefathers since the time of the Pīrs was an eclectic integration of Hindu and Muslim elements. Now, for the first time, they were challenged in a court of law to define their tenets more precisely in a specific situation. Simply stated, the question was: were the Khojā laws of inheritance to be governed by Islamic <u>sharī'a</u> or Hindu law?

The Aga Khan was determined that the body of law binding on his community in this particular matter was to be the Islamic <u>sharī'a</u>. He, therefore, supported the plaintiffs. On the other hand, the

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dissenting party held that they ought to be governed by Hindu laws of inheritance. The stand-point of the latter is very surprising in view of the fact that in other disputes they claimed that the Khojās were Sunnīs and that the Shī'a beliefs in force among them were an innovation and a deliberate product of ulterior motives on the part of the Imam. In his judgement on the case, however, Sir Erskine Perry pronounced against the rights of Khojā women to inherit property according to Islamic law. He also pinpointed the confused identity of the community when he commented that the religion of the Khojās was Muslim but their dress, manners, and appearance were Hindu, that they called themselves Sunnī when they were among the Sunnīs but said they were Shī'a when they were talking to Shi'ites, that their knowledge of Islam was negligible, etc.[15]

In 1848, Habib Ibrahim and his supporters were excommunicated once again as a result of resurgence of disturbance following the suit. Subsequently, they established themselves in a different jamā'tkhānā in another part of the town. In 1850 four Khojas of the dissenting group were murdered by fanatical members of the main body. Those who were arrested were

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capitally sentenced in Bombay. After some time, however, the dissenters were re-admitted into the main body of the community and for a while there was a temporary suspension of hostilities.

In 1861, the Imam made a fresh and determined effort to destroy the ground on which dissension was likely to flourish, and to steer the crucial pre-occupation of the Khojas with the problem of their historical origin, towards the affirmation of a distinctly Ismaili identity. He accordingly published a paper in which he declared that he wished that the rites and customs accompanying "marriages, ablutions, and funeral ceremonies" be performed thenceforward in accordance with the Ismaili creed, "which their ancestors held secretly".[16] He also noted that he had seen in print an accusation by the opposing party that the Khojās were Sunnīs, and that a certain person (meaning himself) had been inviting them into the Ismaili faith. As this was obviously untrue, the Imam demanded that the Ismailis formally affirm their true beliefs. At the end of the statement, he asked, "Now he who may be willing to obey my orders shall write his name in this book that I may know him".[17] The evidence of the Mukhī of the Bombay jamāt, who was called as a witness in the suit,

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confirmed the background of events leading to this declaration of the Imam. He stated that "in consequence of certain newspaper articles stating that the Khojās are Sunnis, the Aga got a writing prepared. He told me ..... he should like to see who of the Khojās were Sunnis and who were Shias; those who were Shias should come and sign this writing."[18] Thus, this declaration can be considered as a highly significant step in what can be seen as the beginning phase in the movement towards the elimination of taqiyya, and the affirmation of a distinctive identity. The judge presiding over the suit drew attention to the fact that this action on the part of the Imam was "not, as it has been occasionally but incorrectly termed, a profession of Shia faith. It is a mere declaration or pledge on the part of those Khojās who in matters of religious opinion, are already Shias, or rather Shia Imami Ismailis, that they will, from the time of signing it, perform their funeral and marriage ceremonies, not according to the Suni form, as it is admitted that they had heretofore done, but according to the Shia form. It is an engagement that those who have all along been Shias, or Shia Imami Ismailis in religious opinion, shall thenceforth be so also in all the departments of religious practice."[19]

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It appears that about one thousand families out of a total of one thousand and four hundred Khoja families in Bombay and its immediate neighbourhood, professed loyalty to the Imam. As a sequel to these developments, the Khojā jamāt met in the jamātkhānā in 1862 and though neither the Imam nor the dissenting party was present (presumably, however, the Imam was not unaware of the proceedings), passed a resolution to serve a form of notice to the dissenters stating that if within twenty-one days they agreed to abide by the regulations of the community and to pay the customary dues, they would be accepted back into the community-fold. Failure to agree to this, however, would forfeit their membership. After the expiry of the stated period and owing to the lack of any response on the part of the seceders, they were officially excommunicated. Finally, in February 1864, the Sunnī mullā attached to the mosque in the Khojā burial ground was asked to leave. Opposition between the contending parties thus became more extreme and led to a final show-down of strength. In 1862 the famous suit was entered in the Bombay High Court, and in 1866 Chief Justice Arnold delivered judgement. The case has come to be known generally as the "Khojā Case", and the judgement was delivered after a lengthy

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proceeding, during the course of which fundamental historical points touching upon the identity of the Khojas as a community were examined in detail.

The Khojā Case was thus an expression, on the formal and constitutional level, of social conflicts and resentments which had been making themselves felt in the community since a long time. Moreover the nature of the questions raised in the case, either as direct consequences of the bill filed by the relators and plaintiffs or as indirect implications of the points at issue, were of a fundamental nature, involving the cardinal principles which formed the heart of the religious and social existence of the community. Thus, "on behalf of the relators and plaintiffs it was contended that the Khojas were originally converted to Suni tenets of Muhammadanism, which had ever since been the religion of the community, and that no one not professing Suni tenets could be held to be a Khoja.. The defendants, though representing a numerical majority of the so-called Khoja sect, yet, having renounced the Suni tenets and adopted those of the Shias could not be held to be Khojas, and were, therefore, not entitled to the possession of the property of the community or to interfere in any way

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in the management of the officers of the community. The Khojas have always observed and still observe the Suni forms of ritual, and employ Suni priests. Aga Khan, being the hereditary Imam of the Ismailis, is necessarily a Shia, and, therefore, neither he nor those who acknowledge him as their spiritual head can claim to be considered Khojas."[20] Furthermore, the prosecuting party also claimed that Pīr Sadardīn who, according to tradition, had been responsible for converting the Khojās from Hinduism, was a Sunnī, and the community had therefore been Sunnī from the beginning.[21]

The defending party reacted to this charge by maintaining that "Pir Sadardin was not a Suni but a Shia of the Imami Ismaili persuasion, that he was a Dai, or missionary, of one of the direct lineal ancestors of the first defendant [i.e. the Aga Khan] - the Imam or spiritual chief for the time then being of the Imami Ismailis; that from the time of the first conversion till now the Khoja community has been and still is (with the exception of the relators and plaintiffs and those comparatively few families among the Bombay Khojas who adhere to them) of the Shia Imami Ismaili persuasion; that the said community (except as aforesaid) always has been bound in close

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ties of spiritual allegiance to the ancestors of the first defendant, Aga Khan, the hereditary chiefs or Imams of the Ismailis, whom the Khoja community always have regarded and (except as above) still regard as their Mursheds or spiritual heads."[22]

It is clear at the outset that the central point of contention was a crucial one, and the final outcome of the case was in effect going to determine the very identity of the Khojas. Indeed, the gist of all the detailed and lengthy arguments in the case was aptly summarized by the counsel for the plaintiffs when he said, "If the Khojas are Sunis, we (the relators and plaintiffs succeed, if they are not Sunis, we fail."[23] Similarly, the claim put forward by the seceders that the Imam had no right to the property of the Khojās and that he should be restrained from exercising authority in the management of the community, was tantamount to asking that the Khojās should be considered as Sunnīs and that the Imāmat was therefore at variance with the tenets of the community. The demand for reduction of the power of the Imam was thus tantamount to a demand that the community change its identity in a matter which occupied a central position in its religious world-view.

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Justice Arnold realized the far-reaching and crucial implications of the suit. During the course of the proceedings of the case there was a lengthy examination of the history and development of Ismailism, the conversion in India, the history of the First Aga Khan and his relations with his followers. In his judgement, at the outset, Arnold summed up the issues which were the subject of inquiry in the case, in the form of the following questions:

"First - What are the SUNIS as distinct from the SHIAS?

Secondly - Who and what are the SHIA IMAMI ISMAILIS?

Thirdly - Who and what is the first defendant AGA KHAN?

Fourthly - Who and what (independently of their distinctive religious belief) are the KHOJAS, and what are and have been their relations with the first defendant and his ancestors?

Fifthly - What have been the relations of the first defendant, AGA KHAN, with the particular community to which the relators and plaintiffs belong, viz., the Khoja community of Bombay?" [24]

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Thus the beginning section of the judgement was devoted to a survey of the Shīa movement which began to gather momentum after the death of the Prophet and came to a head in the dramatic tragedy at Kerbala, and to the emergence of the Ismailis as a distinct off-shoot of this movement. There followed an account of the various phases forming the history of Ismailism through centuries of vicissitudes in their fortunes. It was also pointed out that two significant features of Ismailism in its historical development and propagation - features which had important bearings on the determination of the issues at stake in the suit - were the custom of taqiyya, and the general policy of Ismaili missionaries of "assuming or admitting the truth of the greater portion of the religious tenets of those whom they wished to convert to their own."[25] It was these principles that had been responsible in part for the distinctive characteristics of the conversion of the Khojās and of their subsequent history. However, the history of the Khojā community since the period regarding which it was possible to make inferences based on evidence, was marked by two typical expressions of loyalty to their Imam on the part of his Indian followers: the periodic remittance of

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tributes to the Imam (which could be seen in the old account books presented as evidence in the case), and the habit of making pilgrimages to Persia in order to see the Imam.[26]

After narrating at some length the history of the conflicts in the community and the stormy encounter of the Imam Hasanʿalīshāh with the dissident party, Arnold went on to deal with the question of the religious beliefs of Pīr Sadardīn. From the mass of tradition presented in the court in the course of the examination and cross-examination of witnesses, he abstracted three considerations which had been of decisive and final importance in convincing him that the Khojā community had been Shīʿa Imami Ismailis from the very beginning of their separate existence. The first of these was that if Pīr Sadardīn had been a Sunnī, "he would have stood forth before the Khoja community as the great object of Khoja veneration, with nothing between him and the Apostle of God. In such case the homage, the devotion, the pilgrimages which have been proved to have been made from the beginning by the Khojas to the Imams of the Ismailis, would naturally have been paid to the holy tomb of the great founder and saint who had converted the Khojas to the religion of Islam."[27] However, the fact that

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this was not so, was "quite incompatible with the theory that Pir Sadardin, of his own mere motion as an independent founder and originator, had converted the ancestors of the Khojas to the Suni faith of Islam. On the other hand, it is exactly what might reasonably be expected, if the tradition of the great body of the Khoja community be well founded, viz., that Pir Sadardin was a mere Dai, or missionary, of a living, though distant, Imam of the Ismailis, to whom, as to a living concrete object of respect and worship, he from the first directed the spiritual allegiance and veneration of the new converts.

The second consideration is this: as already shown, it is proved as clearly as any circumstance of the kind is capable of proof among a people where oral tradition supplies the place of written records, that the Khoja community from the beginning made pilgrimages and paid contributions to the hereditary Imams of the Ismailis. Now, how is this clearly established fact to be accounted for? On the supposition that Pir Sadardin was a Dai or missionary of the then Imams of the Ismailis, the explanation is clear and simple; but if this be denied, what other explanation is to be given of the facts? Was there a subsequent conversion and a second founder?

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This is not even pretended, and if there had been some tradition of it it would certainly have been preserved, whereas no such tradition exists or is pretended to exist. When one allegation, supported by an exceedingly strong and uniform current of tradition, clearly explains a proved state of facts, which no other suggested hypothesis will account for, it is surely not enough for those who dispute that allegation simply to set up a counter-allegation, supported by a far weaker current of tradition, which instead of explaining the proved facts, makes them unaccountable. If Pir Sadardin was a Suni, and converted the first Khojas to Sunism, how are we to account for the well-established fact that the Khojas, from the beginning, have been bound by ties of close spiritual allegiance, evidenced by outward acts of homage and devotion, to the hereditary Imams of the Ismailis?"[28]

The third consideration which in Arnold's opinion weighed the balance decisively against the claim that the Khojās were Sunnīs, arose out of the peculiar set of beliefs set out in the Das Avtār, one of the important gīnāns ascribed to Pīr Sadardīn.[29] The lenient attitude towards the idea of the avtārs or

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incarnations in the first nine chapters of the treatise, together with the doctrine that ʿAlī and his successor-Imams were a manifestation of the Divine Light, were radically contrary to Sunnī ideas.[30] In the light of this evidence, the fact that the Khojās observed Sunnī customs at the time that the case took place was of secondary importance. In any case, it could be explained according to the principle of taqiyya. Indeed, this explanation received additional support by considerations of the persecution to which the Shīʿa communities in India would have felt themselves likely to be exposed. This assumption, in Arnold's opinion, was borne out by such evidence as that in Abu-l-Qādir's Muntakab al tawārīkh, which contained the account of the terrible assassination of a Shīʿa mullā who had supported the Mugal emperor Akbar in his attempt to produce a synthesis of Islamic and Hindu ideas.[31] Furthermore, "as to the argument that, though 'Takiah' might account for such compliance with Suni practices in times of persecution, yet is could not account for their continuance after the dread of persecution had disappeared - this reasoning can have no force with those who consider the all but omnipotent power of use and wont in the ordinary usages of social life, and who reflect on the long continuance of practices

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and institutions .... long after the reason of their first establishment and all sufficient grounds for their perpetuation have passed away." [32] In addition to this, the prevalence among the Khojās of certain characteristically Shīá practices left no doubt as to their religious persuasion.[33] Concluding these arguments, which had involved, as we have seen, a careful and thorough examination of the history of the Khojās, Arnold stated that "the Court is now in a position to give an adequate description of the Khojā sect; it is a sect of people whose ancestors were Hindus in origin, which was converted to and has throughout abided in the faith of the Shia Imami Ismailis and which has always been and still is bound by ties of spiritual allegiance to the hereditary Imam of the Ismailis." The suit was accordingly dismissed.[34]

The judgement in the Khojā case has been treated as a highly significant event in the history of the Khojās, both by Ismaili writers and non-Ismaili scholars. It has sometimes been considered as the authoritative definition of the belief-system of the Khojā Ismailis. That the judgement did provide a learned and definitive statement of the doctrine of the Khojās is certainly true. That, however, its importance lay only in one

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particular level of the identity of the community, namely the formal one, and that there had been a substantial continuity at a less directly visible and informal level is a fact that has often been over-looked. The continuity at this level of the identity of the Khojā Ismailis had been part of their self-view, though this self-view may not have been consciously formulated. When it comes to the critical examination by an observer of the social change within a society over a specific span of time, one can postulate either a slow or gradual momentum of change building up over a period, or sudden, radical changes constituting what may be called a "breakthrough" in the identity of the society. One may also postulate a combination of both types of change. We can consider the Khojā case as such a "breakthrough" during the course of the quest for a definite social identity on the part of the community, the religious and cultural features of which included eclectic elements. However, in accordance with what has been discussed above, it is necessary to stress that the "breakthrough" contained in the judgement of the case, dramatic though it was, was nevertheless confined to one level of the life of the community. It did not introduce a new doctrinal system. The claim on the part of the seceders that

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the Imam had been trying to create a new set of doctrines was proved wrong.[35] What it did in fact introduce was a new dimension to the identity of the community. The beliefs and tenets of the Ismailis were now embedded in a pronouncement by an institution of no less prestige than the British High Court, whose legal authority carried the utmost weight and on whose decision the community could fall back in case of similar challenges in the future. In this respect, therefore, the judgement was supremely important.

The Imam Hasan'alīshāh appears to have led a peaceful and settled life, with his authority over the Khojās securely established by law, till his death in 1881. The vast number of family-members, relatives, dependents and retainers that he had brought with him from Persia also settled in Bombay and at some other places, and constituted what was almost a feudal set-up.[36] There were a few sporadic outbursts of minor conflicts, especially in Kutch, but these could not but be on a small and disorganized scale at this stage.[37] He was succeeded on his death by his eldest son, Āgā Alī Shāh, who was known as the Aga Khan II, and was revered by his followers as their forty-seventh Imam. A scholar of Arabic and Persian

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literature and metaphysics, he also served on a number of public and philanthropic bodies, but died in 1885, after only four years of Imāmat. He was succeeded by Sultān Muhammad Shāh, the Aga Khan III (the predecessor of the present Aga Khan), who was then a minor, being only eight years old. During his childhood, the affairs of the community were managed by his mother, a woman noted for her astuteness and piety. The young Imam grew up to be one of the most well-known figures in British diplomacy and international politics. His life and ideas will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. At this stage, we are concerned only with the conflicts over which the development of the community stumbled once again at a time when a new identity was emerging, and which forced it to fall back on its own resources a second time in this chequered phase of its history.

From about the turn of the century onwards, the dissenting group within the Khoja community tended to adopt Ithnaʿasheri dogmas as an ideological front. Those who were excommunicated by the majority group usually became Ithnaʿasheri. The protest was partly directed against the tightening and over-riding authority of the Imam. However, as in the earlier series of protests, there was no consistent

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ideological alternative offered by the protagonists of the dissenting group. Since the judgement in the Khojā case had finally eliminated all grounds for confusion of the Khojās with the Sunnīs, and since, therefore Sunnī ideology could no more be employed as ideological support for protest, Shīʿa beliefs were now employed as a reference-point in these conflicts. Within the confines of the Shīʿa community, therefore, the contentions of the conforming as well as the dissenting parties took the form of polemics based on Ithnaʿasheri and Ismaili ideologies staged against each other.

The drift towards the Ithnaʿasheri community on the part of a dissatisfied minority among the Khojās can be detected at a period as early as that of the Imāmat of Hasanʿalīshāh. Some years after the Khojā case, a few isolated individuals appear to have seceded from the Ismailis to join the Ithnaʿasheris.[38] The first collective secession from the community consisting of a noticeable minority appears to have taken place in 1901.[39] The seceding party is said to have professed belief in the twelve Imams of the Ithnaʿasheris, and to have built an Ithnaʿasheri masjid not far from the Khoja jamātkhānā.[40] In 1908,

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certain members of the Aga Khan's large family who had hitherto been maintained by him, filed a suit against him in the Bombay High Court. They claimed that the maintenance they received from the Aga Khan by way of monthly allowances, property or pensions, were theirs by right; that the tributes and offerings made to the Aga Khan by his followers were meant for the whole family and not solely for him; that, finally, the Aga Khan was an Ithnaʿasheri and not an Ismaili.

The precise nature and importance of this last assertion by the plaintiffs is far from obvious. However, on close examination of the general context in which the assertion was made, it becomes clear that this particular claim was advanced more as a means to an end than as an end in itself. For, by seeking to identify the Aga Khan as an Ithnaʿasheri, the party of relators and plaintiffs aimed at reducing the absolute authority and pre-eminence he enjoyed in his own community as an Ismaili Imam. This would give further ground to their case that the income of the Aga Khan ought to be shared among the family. One may also infer that the fact that some of the relatives of the Imams, including his mother, were Ithnaʿasheri,

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that the Ismailis, being Shi'as, commemorated the tenth day of Muharram, being the anniversary of Imam Husayn, as well as the fact that the seceding party in 1901 had avowed themselves to be Ithna'asheris, led to a potential state of confusion which provided an ideological element in the dispute. However, in his judgement in 1908, Justice Russell, who presided over the case, dismissed the claim as unfounded and far-fetched.[41] The claim on the part of the relators and plaintiffs that the family of the Aga Khan had the right to a share of the income the Aga Khan received from his followers, was also dismissed. The Ismaili community was once again defined as a separate community with distinctive doctrines and tenets, and one which was marked out from both the Sunnī school of Islam as well as other Shī'a sects. The position and powers of the Imam were once again given judicial backing. For a second time, a British High Court had helped the community at a constitutional and formal level to achieve what it had since long been seeking to realize at an informal level. Doubtlessly, the event had different repercussions on these two levels. This was also bound to lead to a dual dimension in the collective consciousness of the Ismaili community.

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In the next chapter, we shall be concerned with similar mechanisms of conflict and continuity, the interplay of the formal and the informal, and the development of a new and systematic organization of the Ismaili community in the social milieu of the East African territories.

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Chapter IV

The Quest for a New Social Identity: Developments in East Africa

It was chiefly during the Imāmat of the late Aga Khan that the dual process of the evolution of a distinctive identity of the Ismaili community in East Africa, and of the internalization of the new image among the members of the community took place. The elaborate organization through which the community's increasingly complex affairs came to be handled as the years went by was essentially a response to the peculiarities of the East African environment. Faced with a situation which presented entirely new and different problems from those which they had had to reckon with in India, the Ismailis were forced to reformulate their social and spiritual concerns and to seek appropriate ways of adjusting to the novelties of the situation - a task for which they could only draw inspiration from a self-image which had been correspondingly re-moulded.

It is necessary to survey the history of the immigration of the Khojā Ismailis to the East African territories and their initial set-up and life-style, in order to understand the latter developments which

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incorporated the quest for a new social identity. However, the student of the history of the Ismailis in East Africa is handicapped by a major limitation in the historical material on which he has to depend for his research. Though travellers, explorers, diplomats and historiographers frequently noted the existence of Indians in East Africa and the importance of their economic role, particularly in the nineteenth century, very few writers seem to have been alert enough to notice the fundamental divisions of religion or caste among the Indian settlers. All that the historian seeking to study the individual Indian communities in East African can hope to do, therefore, is to draw inferences from the hints he can gather from existing material, and to relate these to specific data about the particular community with which he is concerned.

The contacts of Indian traders with the East African coast have been said to be as old as those of the Arabs.[1] Indian traders played a major role in the network of maritime trade along the Western Coast of India, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and the East African coast, and other strategic places in the Indian Ocean from the earliest times. Freeman-Grenville notes the reference to the "brothers of those of India in Sind" on the East African coast, in the chronicles of the Arab writer Ibn Sa'īd.[2] Coupland thought that most of the early

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Indians in East Africa had probably been "what they still are in East Africa - the masters of finance, the bankers, and money changers and money lenders".[3] On the other hand, the Indian traders do not seem to have settled permanently on the East African coast until much later.[4] Vasco-da-Gama found Indians, some of whom seem to have been Khojas at Mozambique, Kilwa, Mombasa and Malindi.[5] With the supremacy of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean from the sixteenth century onwards, the trade with the East African coast dwindled in importance. Indian connections with the coast were re-established, however, with the accession of Seyyid Said as the ruler of Muscat in the nineteenth century. Indians had gained a foothold in the trade at Muscat since the earliest times, and Said, realizing the value of their commercial skill, "used every means in his power to allure the Banians of Cutch, Guzerat and the Concan to Muscat, and by absolute toleration, special immunities, and constant patronage rendered the port a half-Hindoo colony."[7] That the Khojās formed a part of the settlement of traders at Muscat is confirmed in the judgement of the Khojā Case.[8] At the same time, Indians had been settling on the East African Coast. In 1811 Captain Smee, sailing down the coast, found "a considerable number of Banians" settled there.[9]

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He also found that the Indians were prone to mistreatment by the Arab governor, and intervened on their behalf. This established the precedent for future British intervention on their behalf in cases where there was friction between them and the Arabs. During the next decade, Lieut. Col. Reitz, the British governor at Mombasa, found a number of "Banyan" settlers at that port.[10] In 1825, Midshipman Emery, who succeeded him, appointed a "Banyan" collector of customs at Mombasa[11], and in the next year was forced once again to intervene on behalf of the Indians who seem to have received ill-treatment at the hands of the Arab chiefs.[12]

In 1840, Seyyid Said moved his capital permanently to Zanzibar. He adopted a policy of actively encouraging Indian traders by being remarkably well-disposed towards those who had already settled there. Thus the number of settlers rose steadily during his reign and that of his successors. Moreover, over this time, British interests, partly determined by the campaign against slave trade, became stronger on the island and later on, on the East African coast. The Indian settlers established businesses under the encouragement and protection accorded to them by the British. The fact that the British Consul in Zanzibar was appointed and paid by the Bombay government is

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itself signifcant, for it points to the close link that existed between India and Zanzibar. To be sure, there were occasions when the relations of the Indians with the British authorities were strained.[13] Nevertheless this peculiar and ambivalent relationship did not preclude the eventual establishment of British jurisdiction over the Indians. By Said's day, therefore, "nearly all the business of Arab East Africa - the banking, the financing of commercial enterprise, the wholesale and even most of the retail trade - was in Indian hands."[14] Apart from this, the post of Customs Collector, a post of strategic economic and political importance, was always held by an Indian. Small settlements of Indians were also to be found along the coast. By 1843 about 40 to 60 Indians had settled at Kilwa.[15] In 1844, Captain Hamerton reckoned 500 Hindu and 600-700 Muslim Indians in Zanzibar and other coastal ports under the Sultan's authority.[16] The population of the Indians grew steadily over the next decades. By 1860 between 5000 to 6000 Indians had settled in Zanzibar.[17] Their transactions consisted mainly in exports of ivory, cloves, gum copal, hides, horns, copra and a variety of other commodities of which they received consignments from the interior, and imports of cloth, metal-ware, grain, beads, etc. The imports were obtained mainly from India,

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America, and Germany. They also owned considerable stretches of land in Zanzibar.[18]

A substantial number of these traders were Khojās. The explorer Burton noted during the course of his expedition that "the nearest approach to a shop is the store of a Khojah, who will buy and sell everything from a bead to a bale of cloth."[19] Interestingly enough, he observed that the Khojas "practise the usual profound Takiyyah ..... call themselves Sunnis, or Shiahs as the case may require, and assume Hindu as well as Moslem names."[20] He also noted that they had not set up any "Agapomenical establishments" at Zanzibar, and that they travelled widely, several of them having penetrated as far inland as the Lake region.[21] Similarly, Captain Rigby, the British Consul at Zanzibar from 1858 to 1861, noted the presence of Khojās and Bohrās from Kutch, Surat and Bombay. He called them "a very thrifty and industrious people", observing at the same time that they were well-established in trade and shopkeeping, and could compete as serious rivals of the "Banyans".[22] He also made the significant observation that unlike the Hindus, the Muslims (i.e. the Khojās and the Bohrās) emigrated there with a view to permanent settlement.[23]

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Thus the trade in Zanzibar and on the coastal ports came to be dominated mainly by the Khojās, Bohrās, and Hindu settlers. Sir Bartle Frere, the special envoy sent by the British government in 1873 to reinforce the treaties made with the Sultan concerning the abolition of slave trade, wrote that throughout his journey" from Zanzibar round by Mozambique and Madagascar and up to Cape Guardafui we did not ..... meet half a dozen exceptions to the rule that every shopkeeper was an Indian"[24]. In 1886, Col. Kitchener was surprised to find that the British Indian subjects had "the whole of the local trade, as well as that with the interior, entirely in their hands."[25] Meanwhile, further emigration from India had been accelerated by hardships and inhospitable conditions, especially in Kutch. Since many of the Khojās came from Kutch, it is reasonable to suppose that increasingly larger numbers would have emigrated to East Africa owing to both the hardships in their home areas as well as the hope of being able to live a happier life in East Africa. In fact, many of the Indian immigrants over this period came from Kutch.[26] In 1873, Sir John Kirk, the British Consul at Zanzibar, reported that the falling demands for cotton cloth from Kutch and the appearance on the market of cheaper British cotton was responsible for the growing

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number of emigrants from that area.[27] Besides this, the increase in population, the frequent occurrence of droughts, the fragmentation of family holdings, the shortage of land, and the fact that India was losing her position as a manufacturing country (partly owing to the restriction of Indian imports by Britain as a long-term result of her Industrial Revolution), all combined to give an added impetus to emigration.[28] Thus, along with other Indians, the Khojā settlements in Zanzibar and in coastal towns grew in size. In 1866, the year of the Khojā Case, Kirk reported the existence of 2558 Khojās in East Africa, as against 588 Bohrās and 474 Hindus. The Khojās thus formed the majority of the Indian settlers.[29] Similarly James Christie, a British doctor working in Zanzibar, noted the presence of the Khojās on the island, who formed "the largest section of the native mercantile community, permanently resident on the island. They are natives of Cutch, the Kattiwar ports, Surat and Bombay, but they may now be regarded as permanent settlers on the island, most of them having been born there."[30] Besides the Khojās, he also wrote about the Bohras and Memons, and, interestingly enough, noted their distinctness from each other:

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"Each of these sects [i.e. Khojās, Bohrās and Memons] forms a totally distinct community, connected only by the necessities of trade and business, and even in such respects they have but little to do with each other." He also noted that they were occupied in different trades, and "meet and worship in different places; they settle their own disputes among themselves; they have each their peculiar dress, and their manners and customs; and they agree to be separate even in death, for their cemetaries are far apart."[31] Again, he noted that the Khojas were "exclusively engaged in business, wholesale and retail, being the principal merchants and shop-keepers of the place." They also had "extensive business connections with all the ports on the mainland."[32] Describing their communal life, he observed that they met regularly for feasts in a "public building".[33] Moreover, they did not undertake proselytization.[34] He was also struck by the cohesiveness of the community and the spirit of mutual help: "In no class of society, civilized or uncivilized, Christian or Mohammedan, have I ever seen so much kindness and genuine affection displayed towards each other as I have constantly witnessed among the members of the community."[35] Even "the presence of a deadly disease

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in their midst never prevented them from hurrying to the houses of their afflicted friends."[36]

From this time onwards, there was a steady emigration of Indians (including, of course, the Khojās) to East Africa. Such pioneer large-scale enterprisers as Sewa Hajee Paroo, Sir Taria Topan, and Allidina Visram, were all Khojas. Sewa Hajee Paroo operated mainly in what was then German East Africa, with shops at various points in the interior which he supplied with a variety of goods sent through caravans organized at his headquarters in Bagamoyo.[37] Sir Tarya Topan, who for some time held the important post of Customs Collector at Zanzibar, wielded considerable influence on the Sultan. He made use of this influence in persuading the Sultan to take more active measures against the slave-trade, and for this and other instances of co-operation with the British, he was knighted by the government. He also rendered active service to members of his own community, for which he was given the title "vazīr" by the Imam.[38] Allidina Visram, sometimes called the "uncrowned king of Uganda"[39] was a trader on the largest scale that East Africa ever knew in those days. Striking out from Bagamoyo, he set up a vast network of trading posts in the East African hinterland up to the Congo Basin, so that by the first

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decade of this century he had over 30 concerns in East Africa and over 500 Indian and many more African employees. He also owned extensive land holdings and a fleet of ships connecting various ports on Lake Victoria.[40]

The pattern of settlement and trade established by these early pioneers was the one followed by later migrants. Indian immigration received a special impetus from the opening up of links with the interior, which followed the establishment of British authority. From 1890 onwards, there was a sudden and almost phenomenal rise in the importance of the interior. There was also a corresponding decline in the former predominance of Zanzibar. In 1886 the British and German governments had signed a treaty whereby the sovereignty of the Sultan had been confined to Zanzibar and neighbouring islands, and a narrow belt along the coast. Kenya was proclaimed a British "sphere of influence" and Tanganyika was taken over by the Germans. In 1890, Zanzibar was declared a British protectorate. In the same year, Uganda was brought into the British "sphere of influence". In 1893, the British East Africa Company handed over its administration of Uganda to the British government. In 1894, the East African Protectorate was declared. In 1905, the administrative authority over the Protectorate was transferred from the Foreign Office to the Colonial

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Office. These developments took place simultaneously with the increasing importance of some of the coastal towns, which thus began to overshadow some of the former importance of Zanzibar. In 1903, a separate British Commissioner, apart from the one at Zanzibar, had been appointed, with responsibility for the administration of the East African Protectorate. His residence was established at Mombasa. In fact, Mombasa was the most important town on the coast, with a large Indian community. The real and most powerful impetus to emigration, however, was provided by the construction of the railway to Uganda, which began in 1896. It was responsible, in fact, for tremendous changes which altered the landscape altogether. It also drew a massive influx of Indian immigrants. The immigrants who came to East Africa over this time in swelling numbers, can be divided into four categories: (1) those who were recruited as labourers for the railway. These were drawn mainly from Punjab, Karachi, Sindh and the North-Western Provinces in Bombay. Many of them returned to India. A few, however, settled permanently in East Africa. (2) those who were recruited as soldiers. These formed troops which the government needed in order to provide security at the time of the construction. Most of these were Sikhs and came also from Punjab. (3) those who were

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recruited as skilled workers, to help the authorities cope with the growing number of administrative tasks. Most of this class of immigrants came from the Bombay Presidency. (4) those who, in the wake of this tremendous flurry, migrated in order to set up trading concerns. These were mainly drawn from the commercial classes in Gujrat, Kathiawar and Kutch. While the first three categories of traders were recruited by the government of India, this last group migrated on their own accord. It is to this last category of migrants that Khojā Ismailis belonged. Indeed, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the economic condition of the Khojās in India appears to have undergone a most marked change. The more adventurous businessmen among them had established trading connections with Europe, Zanzibar, Muscat, the Middle East, China and Japan.[41] It was from this group, therefore, that the Khojas who emigrated to East Africa at the turn of the century were drawn. The pattern of trade and settlement they seem to have followed in East Africa was typical of the general pattern followed by the Indian migrants on the whole. Most of them settled initially at Zanzibar. Later they set up branches of their main concerns in different towns on the coast. From here, they forged ahead into the interior. With the construction of the railway, this pattern became increasingly well-established

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and many Indians set up concerns around Lake Victoria. When the coastal towns and other towns in the interior began to supersede Zanzibar, many immigrant traders settled directly at important places, such as Mombasa and opened new firms. In this process of migration, kinship and religious ties were important. As more and more branches were opened in the interior, more personnel were needed, and those who had already settled were inclined to trust only their kinsmen as their associates or agents. This was mostly due to the nature of the economic enterprise at this stage. The shops set up by the migrants could flourish only through personal supervision, and there was no other way of turning to advantage the profits which were obtained (especially in view of the restrictions on land-purchase in Kenya, for instance) except by opening other shops. In these circumstances, therefore, it is natural that when more personnel were needed in order to expand their firms, the established traders would turn to those who were related to them or at least those who belonged to their own caste or sect, rather than to strangers. Thus, there came to be established in East Africa small nuclei of caste-communities (in the case of the Hindus) or sects (in the case of the Muslims), on the basis of which later

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crystallization of the migrant into "communities" was to take place.[43]

Meanwhile, the Aga Khan III had explicitly advised some of his followers in India to migrate to East Africa. As early as 1890, the Imperial British East Africa Company had made proposals to the government of India to the effect that Indian migrants should be encouraged to settle on the mainland of East Africa as agriculturists.[44] The German authorities in Tanganyika had similar plans.[45] In 1900, the Aga Khan, during his visit to Berlin, discussed with the German government a scheme to settle Khoja Ismaili agriculturists in Tanganyika.[46] A year ago, during his visit to East Africa, the Aga Khan had faced a bitter dispute between his community and the government in Kenya as well as the German authorities in Tanganyika, over the land-rights of his followers.[47] On his second visit to East Africa in 1905, the Aga Khan made a farmān at Nairobi on 6th October, in which he told his jamāts how gratified he would be if some of the poorer members of the faith, who were facing great hardships in Kathiawar, were helped to settle in Kenya as agriculturists. He also warned his Nairobi followers, however, not to help the prospective emigrants by way of charity when they arrived. For, he said, they ought not be encouraged to

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be parasitic on the jamāts or on the country, but helped to make an active contribution to development.[48] Although not many Khojās became agriculturists owing to the subsequent policy on the part of the colonial government in Kenya to restrict the sale of land to Europeans, many members of the community spread out into the different towns on the coast and in the interior as traders, in accordance with the guidance and advice of their Imam.

Having thus noted the important facts about the migration of the Khojā Ismailis to East Africa and the pattern of their trade and settlement, we shall now turn to consider how, from the nucleus of a "community" that they had established in their new home they evolved into a distinct group with a highly differentiated identity in relation to other Indian migrants. As we have noted, the pattern of the immigration and settlement of the Ismailis in East Africa was essentially the same as that of the other Indian migrants. In this, therefore, the Ismailis were part-and-parcel of the Indians as a whole. On the other hand, their religion had highly characteristic and exclusive features, and this set them apart from the other Indians, even if in the early stages this differentiation was only latent and inarticulate. At the same time, their world-view was going to be subjected

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to a critical and heightened awareness and their attitude towards the secular order consequently altered, owing to the leadership of the Aga Khan III. The factors which were of causative importance in the process of social change which marked the career of the Ismaili community in East Africa during this period, can be broadly divided into three categories: (1) stresses and strains within the system, and (2) the impact of external forces constituting the environment in which the system was embedded. The division into these two broad categories, in fact, is applicable in the analysis of the social change in most societies. In the case of the Ismailis, the stresses and strains within the system were the result of dissent and of consequent estrangement of conflicting elements. The external forces responsible for changes in the organization of the system were the product of the social environment of the community, comprising the presence of Indians with whom the Ismailis shared many cultural characteristics, as well as the policies of the colonial government and the growing tide of African nationalism in later years. Both these categories which influenced and stimulated changes in organization interacted in the adept leadership of the Imam, who to a large extent controlled and geared the changes, and thus made them the object of a planned and

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deliberate policy. In order to realize the full importance of this process, therefore, it is necessary to bear in mind at the outset the career and personality of the Imam who presided over this era of change. This would enable one to gain a fuller understanding of the nature of the impact he had upon his followers.

Muhammad Sultān al-Ḥusayni, generally known as Sultān Muhammad Shāh, was born at Karachi in 1877. He succeeded his father, Āgā ʿAlī Shāh, as Imam, when he was as yet a minor, only eight years old. His mother, a Persian Princess, was an ardent mystic. Indeed, he himself, throughout his life, retained a view of Islam which can best be described as mystical.[49] Educated in both Islamic theology and western literature and science, he grew up in the belief that the two could somehow be, and indeed ought to be, synthesized, to provide Muslims with a new outlook appropriate to the changing times. He remained on cordial terms with British imperial policy in India, and his role in Indian politics was largely based on an acceptance of the principle of imperial rule. Moreover, he had no independent base from which to operate in politics. In 1937, he became the President of the League of Nations. He also campaigned for separate representation for the Muslims of India, was President of the Muslim League in its early

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stages (1906-1912), and was closely associated with those Muslim leaders who were later to figure prominently in the politics of Pakistan. In 1928, he presided over the All-India Muslim Conference at Delhi, which resolved to press for separate representation for the Muslims. Again, in 1930, he led the Muslim delegation (whose members included Muhammadali Jinnah, Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan and Sir Muhammad Shafi), to the Round Table Conference on the Indian Constitution. More important than his political role, however, was his attitude towards education and science. This in turn was to have almost dramatic effects on the ideas of his followers about their faith and its standpoint towards the secular order. In 1897, when Bombay and other parts of India were hit by Plague, he had himself innoculated in public so as to counteract prejudice against innoculation on the part of the Muslims and the Ismailis, and to encourage them to accept modern medicine. This incident, and many other similar events, illustrate his enthusiasm for scientific progress - an attitude which was going to have a far-reaching impact on the religious views of his followers. He also campaigned vigorously for better education for Muslims in India and elsewhere, and was actively involved with the founding of the Muslim University at Aligarh. Among the issues about which he

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felt strongly was what he saw as the subordinate status and segregation of women in Muslim countries - a state of affairs which he thought was un-Islamic. On the whole, his long life of nearly eighty years saw many changes in the political, social, intellectual and other fields in the world at large, in some of which he was actively involved. We are only concerned, however, with the impact of his personality, policies, and general views on the religious and social life of the East African Ismailis, and the extent to which social change among them was the direct result of his own career. Having noted the more salient episodes in his life, therefore, we shall now go on to consider in detail the process of social change among the Ismailis through successive phases of their history in East Africa.

The closing years of the nineteenth century and the beginning years of this century were for the Ismailis in East Africa a period of protracted struggle against dissenters. This phase of the history of the community was thus riddled with conflicts. The general mood was, therefore, one of restlessness and this led to a tendency towards a rigorous severance of ties from all those who dissented from the majority and were thus a threat to their social stability. The attitude of the Ismailis

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towards those who dissented from the beliefs held by the majority of the followers was often ruthlessly intolerant; and though the Aga Khan himself officially discouraged it, bitter recriminations and ideological skirmishes between the two groups continued for a long time. We have seen how, in the events preceding and culminating in the Khojā Case of 1866, the dissenters attempted to express their grievances in a form which was designed to weaken the ability of the community to sustain its ideological standpoint. To this end, they asserted that the fact that the Ismailis had been observing Sunnī rites in certain expressions of their social and religious life raised serious doubts as to the historical authenticity of the specific doctrines that the Ismailis claimed their ancestors had followed since their existence as a separate community. The Ismailis who had settled in Zanzibar over this period were not unaffected by the events which took place in India as a result of this dispute. To a marked extent, they were alert to the stress that their parent community had to face. This was chiefly due to the paramount position of the Imam in Ismaili doctrine. The ethic of loyalty to the Imam united the various Ismaili communities all over the world through the absolute sovereignty of a cardinal tenet of their faith which was the same the world over. Regular journeys on the part of devoted pilgrims to the residence of the Imam

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strengthened and reinforced these ties, so that the awareness of belonging to a common faith which was shared by others who were culturally distinct but spiritually united was simultaneously intensified. The fact that Ismailis from Zanzibar were included in bands of pilgrims who visited the Imam Hasan'alīshāh from time to time, was confirmed by witnesses in the Bombay High Court suit of 1908.[50] Kinship ties probably formed secondary and additional factor linking the Ismailis in Zanzibar with the parent community. It is not surprising, therefore, that Hasan'alīshāh's order that his followers should renounce taqiyya and observe marriage and death ceremonies in accordance with Shī'a rites was also circulated in Zanzibar. 445 out of the 450 Khojā families on the island signed a paper pledging acceptance of the Imam's order.[51] The outcome of the Khojā Case in 1866 rejected the claims of the dissenting party and accorded constitutional recognition to the Khojās as followers of Imami Ismaili doctrines. After a temporary and effective cessation of dissent, there was fresh outbreak of opposition during the early years of the Imāmat of the Aga Khan III. The dissenters now adopted Ithna'asheri ideas and on the basis of these, criticized Ismaili beliefs and practices. In other words, Ithna'asheri doctrines were made a point of reference against which Ismaili belief and practices were contrasted and criticized. The predominant

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dynamics of the conflict were social; the two groups were set against each other in sharp opposition, each group considering the other as an "out-group" to be condemned. Theological points, though recurring frequently in the debate, were obviously of a secondary importance, and failed to develop into a consistent ideology. An Ismaili writer, recording the rise of such factions, writes that in the initial phase of his Imāmat, the Aga Khan III took up as one of his priorities the unifications of his jamāts and the elimination of dissent.[52] "From this time," he goes on, "the terms Ismaili and Ithna'asheri became more prevalent. Now and then quarrels and dissenssion used to arise between these two parties in the jamātkhānā."[53] He also writes that as the community came to be more tightly organized, the dissenters found themselves compelled to secede. In East Africa, the first signs of schism appeared in the late 1890's and came to a head in the closing years of the century. The British Consul-General in Zanzibar at that time writes that he had to expel a preacher from the dissenting group, owing to the militant nature of his propaganda.[54] One of the targets of attack on the part of the group opposing the conforming majority was the absolute authority of the Imam, whose role had been defined - and thus strengthened - in the court judgement of 1866. Another focus of discontent was the customary

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dues payable to the Imam. Towards the end of the century a group of dissenters who had seceded from the community laid claim to the jamātkhānā and other communal property which they had been sharing in common with the other Ismailis. Legally, as we have seen, the communal property of the Ismailis was vested in the Imam's name. The seceders' claim, however, was rejected by the court. In 1899, the Aga Khan visited Zanzibar for the first time. Up to now, Ismaili leaders had been visiting the Imam from time to time in Bombay or elsewhere. By visiting Zanzibar, the Aga Khan in a sense recognized it as a sufficiently important and distinct community, on the same footing as the many other Ismaili communities spread over the world. It is also interesting to note that during this first visit of his, the Aga Khan visited only Zanzibar and Bagamoyo, while his second tour of East Africa in 1905 included a visit to Nairobi and Mombasa in addition to Zanzibar. This reflects the pattern of settlement for, as we have seen, by this time the Ismailis, in common with other Indian communities, had already settled at important places on the mainland. In 1901, the breach between the two factions in the community led to secessions on the part of the dissatisfied individuals. During his second visit to Zanzibar in 1905, the Aga Khan executed a power of attorney appointing three of his followers as official leaders of

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the community.[55] He also supervised the compilation of a code of laws binding on the members of the community. Due to these constitutional developments, the informal mingling of dissenting members with the rest of the followers, and the possibility of the doctrines of the community becoming diluted and ill-defined was averted. Thus the necessity of keeping the dissidents at bay was in itself one of the factors which called for a tremendous organizational change. For it was only through rigorous organization that an institutional method of dealing with dissent could be devised. And it was only when such a method had been devised that the belief-system of the Ismailis could be preserved intact, and their social identity more firmly established.

From this time onwards, therefore, protest against the established set-up met a more rigorous and severe reaction from the community. The task was rendered more pressing and difficult by the fact that many seceders were close relatives of the protagonists of the parent-body. Hence there emerged within the Ismailis a set of strictly enforced rules which forbade marriages and social intercourse between members of the two parties. Communal worship and gatherings were now strictly limited to loyal Ismailis. The seceders were totally deprived of their former connections and found themselves

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compelled to become Ithna'asherie.[56] Hence the term "Khojā Ithna'asheris", which came to be applied to those Ithna'asheries who had previously been Ismailis and had subsequently either seceded or been forced to secede from the Ismaili community owing to their opposition to its organization and its religious tenets. Over the course of time, therefore, such conflicts diminished and eventually died down. In this way, the Ismailis successfully established themselves as a distinct group in its own right, sharply and unmistakably demarcated from the other Indian groups. Thus, in 1924, the Chief Justice sitting in a High Court of Tanganyika noted that "the Ismaili Khoja .... had established a distinctive political and social organization for themselves, and had never been absorbed in the general body of Muslims."[57] On the other hand, it appears that if the Imam had been eager to eliminate conflicts within the community he was also anxious to ensure that his followers should not retain a negative relationship with the seceders. He was thus anxious to avert what might have amounted to a permanent show-down with the Khojā Ithna'asheris. His ideal was that the latter should be treated with the same neutral attitude which characterized the Ismailis' relationship with other religious groups in East Africa. To this end he made farmāns urging his followers to treat the Khojā

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Ithna'asheris as a separate group in their own right, and to refrain from indulging in any active animosity or even directing hostile remarks at them. It was this attitude which finally came to be embodied in the various constitutions that were formulated with a view to maintaining discipline and uniformity in the East African Ismaili communities. For example, the constitution issued in 1946 laid down the following injunctions regarding the manner in which members of the Ismaili community were required to treat seceders:

"When a person gives up the Ismaili faith and acquires another, he shall be treated by the Ismailia community in the same manner as the other members of the faith which he adopts.

Such a person shall in no way be entitled to the use of the Jamatkhana, burial ground or other privileges hitherto enjoyed while such person was a member of the Ismaili faith."

"No seceder shall be eligible nor allowed admission into any of the Ismaili institutions or Jamatkhana. Seceders may be invited in any functions where members of other communities are invited but not in Jamatkhana."

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"No one shall participate in social and educational matters wherein only seceders are connected. Participation is permitted if there are members of other communities in such institutions or societies at large."

"No one shall participate in any religious ceremonies with seceders nor invite such persons on such occasions. But on all other occasions including funerals seceders will be treated as members of other faiths or communities."[58]

If this is not the attitude one finds in the early phase of the community's history in East Africa, when conflict was rife, the reason is that it was only when the identity of the community had been firmly established that the secure basis which was necessary for an attitude of neutrality to flourish was attained. The policy which emerged eventually, and which was unrelenting towards internal dissent but indifferent towards those who had crossed over into other faiths, was expressed by the Aga Khan as follows:

"Our religion is our religion, you either believe in it or you do not. You can leave a faith but you cannot, if you do not accept its tenets, remain within it and claim to 'reform' it. You can abandon those tenets, but you cannot try to change them and still protest that you belong to the particular sect that holds them .....

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.....There has never been any question of changing the Ismaili faith, that faith has remained the same and must remain the same. Those who have not believed in it have rightly left it; we bear them no ill-will and respect them for their sincerity."[59]

Thus, beginning from a stage when the struggle against dissenting factions among themselves had been one of the central preoccupations of the Ismailis, the community came not only to be organized as a more homogenous group with well-defined beliefs which were binding upon the members, but also to establish specific mechanisms for discipling those who deviated from these norms. Their distinctiveness as a religious community came to be increasingly recognized by other communities and by the British authorities. In later years, the remarkably elaborate organization that they established as a practical embodiment of their separate identity had the effect of leaving no doubt as to their being a highly distinctive group with specific doctrines, and this fact, from then on, was taken for granted. The role of the early conflicts in this movement towards the ultimate realization of the exclusiveness of their identity on the part of the Ismailis can be understood more clearly in the light of some relevant propositions from the sociology of conflict-situations.

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Lewis A. Coser made an apt and theoretically most useful distinction when he pointed out the difference between conflicts "over the basis of consensus on one hand" and those that took place "within the basic consensus" on the other.[60] In the former case, there was room for reconciliation; in the latter, nothing short of radical cleavage could be expected. The former type of conflict led to the re-establishment of equilibrium when reconciliation took place, while the latter served as a threat to this very equilibrium. In this second type of situation, therefore, the contending parties were compelled to sever themselves from each other in order to survive:

"In so far as conflict is the resolution of tension between antagonists it has stabilizing functions and becomes an integrating component of the relationship. However, not all conflicts are positively functional for the relationship, but only those which concern goals, values, or interests that do not contradict the basic assumptions upon which the relation is founded."[61]

It is obvious that the conflict between the conforming and protesting Ismaili groups that we have been considering so far involved a fundamental disagreement over the "basic assumptions" upon which the criteria of

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membership of the Ismaili community were based. Thus, the contending parties in this case were antagonists who had pitched their camps on separate grounds altogether. To the opposing minority, the basic principles which constituted the doctrinal system of the community were unacceptable. To the rest of the community, this challenge on the part of the dissenters was tantamount to a negation of their own existence as a community with a distinct and specific interpretation of Islam. There was no alternative for them in the light of their interpretation of the situation to stopping the social traffic between their own community and the Ithna'asheri sect, which to them was a totally different community owing to the fundamental divergence of views about the Imamat. For in their view a situation which permitted the dissenters to communicate and retain contacts with both these communities was a threat to their own identity. Hence the formal closure of gates that the conforming party carried out through constitutional action and through an overhaul of their own internal organization. The peculiar intensity of the conflict lay in the fact that the dissenters were so closely in contact, owing to kinship ties, with the rest of the members of the community. For again, as Coser pointed out, "a conflict is more passionate and more radical when it arises out of

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close relationships. The co-existence of union and opposition in such relations makes for the peculiar sharpness of the conflict."[62] Hence, once the seceders crossed over into the rival Khojā Ithna'asheri community, the arena of the conflict shifted. It was now an external conflict for each of the rival parties, rather than an internal one for the Ismailis. The effects of this conflict with Ithna'asheri seceders on the attitude of the Ismaili community, were to be seen in their successful mobilization of resources towards a more vehement assertion of their own identity and separateness from the other groups. Thus the conflict-situation was to a certain extent responsible for the eventual emergence of the Ismailis as a highly corporate group. For, as Coser observed, "Conflict serves to establish and maintain the identity and boundary lines of society and groups. Conflict with other groups contributed to the establishment and reaffirmation of the identity of the group and maintains its boundaries against the surrounding social world."[63] Indeed, the role of conflict in the determination of such "boundary lines" is judged to be decisive:

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"It seems to be generally accepted by sociologists that the distinction between 'ourselves, the we-group or in-group, and everybody else, or the others-groups, out-groups' .... is established in and through conflict."[64] Furthermore, the effect of such conflict is to lead to "the mobilization of the energies of group members and hence to increased cohesion of the group."[65]

It would not be untrue to say, therefore, that in the early phase of the history of the Ismailis, the conflict with minority protest-groups within themselves was one of the factors, and perhaps one of the most potent ones, in creating in the leaders of the community a most pressing urge to overhaul the organization of the community, so that it could be more securely protected from the possibility of disruption through the existence of factions within it. In this sense, the dissenssion within the community can be regarded as "growing pains" during what can be considered as the adolescent phase in the history of its social organization.

On the other hand, however, it would be a distortion to assert that the conflicts with which the Ismailis had to cope at this stage was the sole or even the most important factor in the creation of a new and more distinctive social identity. After all, the Khojā

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Ithna'asheri were only one community in the social environment of the Ismailis. The social transactions of the Ismailis were spread over a network of other Indian communities. In similarity to their dealings with the seceders, the Ismailis also asserted the distinctiveness of their identity vis-a-vis the other Indian communities, as we shall see below. There was, however, a fundamental difference between the relations of the Ismailis with the Khojā Ithna'asheri on one hand and the other Indian communities on the other. In the case of the latter, the dominant element in the relationship was not antipathy but a striving to be different. There were no instances demonstrating any animosity on the part of the Ismailis towards the other Indian groups. In this respect, the Ithna'asherie formed more of an "out-group" in the sense in which the term is sometimes employed in sociology.[66] Unlike them, the other Indian communities were no more than "others" and the Ismailis attitude towards them was characterized as much by neutral indifference as it was by the consciousness of their being different. On the whole, the multiplex nature of the social environment of the Ismailis renders impossible any straightforward analysis of the organizational changes in East Africa. Therefore the stimulus for the drive towards a corporate structure which had the

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effect of setting the community apart from others, cannot be located only in the conflicts with the seceders. Part of the reason has to be sought elsewhere. It has to be remembered, in this connection, that the unique importance of the function of the Imāmat in the belief system of the community was in itself a feature sufficiently striking and characteristic to set the Ismailis apart from the other communities around them. Indeed, the importance of this feature as a source of the distinctiveness of the Ismailis cannot be over-emphasized. Even the resilience with which the community was able to withstand the attack from the protest-group and to draw upon its own resources in order to devise a new organization in the service of maintaining those very principles which had been at stake, owed itself to the centralizing force of the Imāmat. In the ultimate analysis much of the remarkable tenacity which the Ismailis displayed in the face of adversity was due to their ideational system, of which the Imāmat was the most vital component. The fact that the Imam was a living person, and that he had an added personal charisma reinforced this support provided by the ideation of the community. Without this tenacity of purpose, the outcome of the conflicts would necessarily have been different, for, to quote Coser once again, "Social systems lacking social

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solidarity are likely to disintegrate in the face of outside conflict."[67] The role of the Imāmat in promoting the social solidarity of the Ismailis, however, is not the concern of the present chapter, and will be discussed at a later stage. For the moment, we shall go on to examine the relationship of the Ismailis to other Indian groups in East Africa and the place of this relationship in the history of the community's quest for a distinctive social identity.

Up to now we have been concentrating on the dynamics of conflict within the Ismaili community in East Africa, a process over the course of which internal dissension within the society posed a serious threat to its very identity. Consequently, internal fragmentation was successfully prevented and the threat of disruption overcome through changes in the organization of the society. However, this phase of the community's struggle for a new identity consisted of a social process that was primarily internal. We now turn our attention to examine that aspect of the drive towards a redistribution of organizational resources within the community which was derived from the pressure of the external milieu. Indeed, as we have seen, in any society the factors leading to social change can be broadly divided into those which act from within the

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system and those which represent the influence of external factors. The social environment of the Ismailis in East Africa comprised diverse elements. The most immediately relevant part of the social milieu, however, was composed of the various Indian groups, both Hindu and Muslim (notwithstanding the Goans, and the Parsis who were Zoroastrians), who had settled in the four territories alongside the Ismailis. The general pattern of settlement and the nature of the problems that all these communities had to confront were remarkably similar. Naturally on finding themselves in a country where the social and economic conditions were so markedly different from those that prevailed in India, these communities were compelled to make certain changes in their traditional organization which they had inherited from India, in order to adapt themselves to the new conditions. It was only by a revision of certain important aspects of their social organization in India that they could expect to derive the utmost benefit out of the resources that their new home offered them. In the course of this readjustment, the relationship of each of these communities to the other turned out to be at least as important as their respective relationships to the European and African sections of the population. In the course of this process, the Ismailis emerged as a

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highly corporate group, having effected important changes in their organization and a consequent adjustment to East African conditions. To the extent that they moved in this direction, however, they also ruled out any possibility of associating with the other Indian communities in any significant manner beyond that which was absolutely necessary. The erection of a well-defined organizational mechanixm aimed at preserving the boundary-lines of the community was not entirely an innovation. It was a mere realization, on the concrete plane, of what had always been on the ideational plane a highly distinctive set of beliefs.

In order to understand the situation which made it necessary for the Indian migrants in East Africa to make alterations in their traditional system of organization, it is important to understand first the system of stratification within which the Hindu and Muslim communities were classified in India. An important point to be borne in mind here is that in India stratification by caste is all-embracing, particularly for the Hindus, and causes virtually every group in the country to be ranked in the caste-hierarchy - a system of ranking that holds unquestionable validity in the eyes of the traditional Hindus. The word "caste" is used in English to cover several types of groupings. It is most

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commonly used, however, as equivalent to the term jati, which simply denotes the various social groups within the general four-fold division of Hindu society.[68] The members of one particular jati, however, might at the same time belong to different local hierarchies in different districts. They nevertheless belong to the same wider jati or - to use the term suggested by H.S. Morris - "caste - category".[70] In East Africa Hindus coming from different districts in India but belonging to the same wider jati or "caste-category", associated with each other to form a single community. It is in this way that various Hindu "communities" emerged in East Africa. For it was impossible for them to transplant the caste-system in India to the entirely different social milieu of East Africa. For one thing, the migrants to East Africa did not all come from one district, and each district in India had its own local stratification, and since the inhabitants of one particular district were not necessarily familiar with the hierarchy in another district, it was impossible for the hierarchy of any one particular district to be reproduced in East Africa. Moreover, members of certain sub-castes were entirely lacking among the migrants. Again there was a division of labour corresponding to the hierarchy constituting the traditional system of stratification in India. The general result of this

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occupational differentiation of various caste-groups in the society was to make them complementary to each other rather than competitive among themselves. In contrast, in East Africa, it was clearly not feasible to reproduce these occupational divisions. The different communities that emerged on the basis of the new associations were, in fact, competitive towards one another in their economic pursuits. Above all, the laws and requirements of the British administration in the East African territories made strict observation of the caste-system impossible. It is for these reasons that social groupings or "communities" emerged among the Hindus in East Africa.[71]

The Muslim groups in India represented by migrants in East Africa were also, in general, closely fitted to the caste-scheme.[72] They, too, organized themselves as "communities" in East Africa, the divisions in their case corresponding to the various sects of Islam to which they belonged, especially in the case of the Shi'as. The Sunnīs were too few to organize themselves as corporately as the Shī'a sects. In any case, the aversion of Muslims to caste or sectarian divisions made them well-disposed towards the use of the term "communities" to denote the various divisions among them that were represented in East Africa.[73]

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Thus there arose, in the East African territories, a number of separate Hindu and Muslim "communities", producing on the whole a picture different from that in India. While the Hindu "communities" in East Africa drew upon members belonging to common jati or caste-categories, the divisions among the Muslims corresponded with sectarian differences. The Ismailis were by no means an exception to this general trend of organization. They too had a distinctive identity based upon their religious doctrines. The elements derived from their Hindu origin had been progressively eliminated over the centuries, so that their historical relationship to Islam had begun to be markedly reinforced. The Khojā Case and its outcome had firmly stamped upon the community a renewed sense of identity, and one which was constitutionally recognized. Above all, the unique position of the Imāmat in their system had been responsible for a remarkable tenacity and a determination to organize themselves on the basis of their cardinal principles. Owing to these reasons, from the time of their very first existence in East Africa, the Ismailis had within them the nucleus of a separate organization. They were not, however, so conspicuously well-organized, exclusive and prosperous as they came to be later. The role of the internal dissenssion and subsequent secessions

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in the emergence of such an organization has already been examined. The peculiar situation in East Africa where a number of communities from India existed alongside each other and were involved in common economic pursuits, and shared common languages and essentially a common style of life, together with the attitude of the British Colonial administration to these communities were additional factors involved in the decision by the Ismailis to organize themselves in the way they did. It is this factor and the manner in which it influenced the Ismailis in taking far-reaching and strategic decisions to organize themselves on systematic lines, that we shall now proceed to examine.

For the purpose of analysis, one can distinguish three factors that were jointly responsible for the kind of ofganization that emerged among the Ismailis during the first half of this century. The importance of each of these factors was qualitatively different. The potential realization of institutionalized separateness was inherent in the ideational system of the Ismailis, as we have seen before. A concrete test of this distinctive identity was provided by the position of the Indian communities in East Africa vis-a-vis one another. It was not, however, until the Colonial government, through its

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policies, posed an indirect threat in the way of the Ismailis' quest for a distinctive social identity - a quest they had taken up so ardently after the difficulties at the turn of the century - that they received a real incentive to realize in actuality their self-image as a group based on a specific set of doctrines. As for the first factor, the "built-in" distinctiveness on the ideational plane, we shall consider it in detail only in the next chapter. The second factor is worth noting here. We have already seen that the Indian communities in East Africa shared many cultural traits in common. Nevertheless, they were not anywhere near being fully integrated. In spite of common cultural characteristics, therefore, they maintained their own separate identities. Hence, existing alongside a certain measure of cultural uniformity, was an economic rivalry and a sense of being different from one another. It is significant to note that the Ismailis formed the majority of the Indian Muslims in East Africa.[74] Thus, though, they were no more than a fraction of the Indian population as a whole, their numbers were not negligible, and it would not be entirely wrong to imagine that this factor gave them an added self-confidence and an increased incentive in the process of realizing their

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already separate identity in a more concrete form. Another important point that should be noted in this connection is that the majority of the Indian population lived in urban areas.[75] In many quarters of the various towns in East Africa members of the different communities were likely to be found living close to one another. Though it may sound paradoxical, the familiarity resulting from this situation was likely to lead to an intensified feeling of being different from one another. The Ismailis, to be sure, were not alone in maintaining themselves as a separate community. As has been noted above, the Hindus were organized into separate communities on the basis of "caste-categories". The Muslims were similarly demarcated from each other on the basis of their sectarian allegiance. Thus the various Indian groups existed alongside one another with a characteristic ambivalence in their attitudes. That they shared a great many cultural features in common was a self-evident fact. That there was an undercurrent of tension between them which sometimes took the form of more overt antagonism, was of no lesser significance. The following passage in a letter written by the District Commissioner in Uganda brings out most vividly the hostility between the various groups that erupted from time to time:

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"Whenever possible, sites for mosques should be given some little way from the main bazaar, otherwise there is always the likelihood of trouble between the Hindoos and the Indian Mohammadans. I have vivid recollections of a quarrel which arose every year at Mbale during the 'Moharrum' (Shia festival commemorating the death of Ali [Sic]). The Mohammadans claimed that the action of the Hindoos in playing gramophones was intended to be an insult, and the resultant court cases were a hardy annual to which the D.O. could look forward to every year."[76]

Such incidents, however, were not so common as to lead to active or violent strife between the various communities. The factors discussed above can be considered as secondary factors which accelerated the emergence of the Indian communities. On their own, they were not in any way so crucial as to have served as the main stimulus to the crystallization of the various Indian groups into recognizable communities. The essential spur to the process was provided by the policies of the Colonial government. The reaction of the Ismailis to these policies was most distinctive and in some ways almost dramatic. The reason why the Ismailis responded to the circumstances that were pressing them in such a marked fashion will not be discussed until in a later chapter. Here we shall confine ourselves only to

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the essential facts about the relevant aspects of the colonial policy towards the Asians, and the reaction of the Ismailis to what to them must have appeared as an "intrusion" into an area which was theirs by moral right.

One of the important aspects of colonial policy which in fact was highly unrealistic, was the tendency on the part of the administration to treat the Indian population in Uganda as if they formed a single, homogenous "community". The most important reason for this, of course, was the fact that the Colonial administration lacked in sight into the complexities of the social organization of the Indians. A more practical reason was that the government authorities found it too laborious to have to deal with each of the communities separately in administrative matters:
"For a busy administrative officer, it was convenient to consider the Indians in his district to be a united group of people who lived and traded in gazetted townships. If they approached him through a local Indian Association representing all Indians, his work was made easier...."[77]
Indeed in most cases, for purposes of political expediency the inhabitants of the various countries were divided into simply three categories, "European", "Asian" (which included the Indian as well as the Arab communities) and "African". Census reports usually quoted simply the

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number of "Asians" resident in each of the four countries respectively. Their political representation in the Legislative Councils was usually spoken of as "Asian" representation. In some cases, a distinction was drawn between the Hindus and the Muslims, but further sub-divisions were seldom treated with the seriousness that they called for. The knowledge of the officials in this matter was limited, and they never seem to have paid due attention to the fundamental differences between the various Indian communities.

The failure on the part of the Colonial administration to realize the magnitude of the differences between the various Indian communities was reflected in a number of policy decisions. It was these decisions that made the communities apprehensive about their social identity. Since the Ismaili community was already the most organized of all, and since its consciousness of its own distinct identity, on account of its religious doctrines, was most pronounced, and since, again, the prestige and influence of the Aga Khan with the British government put him into a very strong bargaining position, the Ismailis were naturally the first to protest, and showed the most determined resistance. The pattern of events was largely similar in all the four territories of East Africa and the reaction on the part of the Ismailis exactly parallel.

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One particular issue at stake was the question of communal burial-grounds, which turned out to be a very sore issue and the source of marked friction and bitterness. One instance of protracted conflict of this nature took place in Zanzibar. During his visit to the island in 1899, the Aga Khan had himself helped to bring about an agreement between his followers and the Zanzibar authorities, regarding the ownership of a piece of land used by the Khojas as their burial-ground. In 1912, however, the Ismailis indignantly reported that the government had let part of the ground to members of other communities for building, stalls and fan-fare structures and they therefore complained to the Aga Khan. The latter in turn wrote to the Viceroy of India, lamenting that "a coldness entirely due to mischief-making and false charges of impoverishing the country brought by other Indians who are in government employ in East Africa should exist."[78] The situation was considered to be potentially volatile and it led to a lengthy, three-cornered correspondence between the Aga Khan, the Viceroy, and the Imperial Government in London. This incident brings to light three important facts. Firstly, it serves to demonstrate that a general atmosphere of tension existed in East Africa between the British authorities and the Indian communities on one hand, and between the Ismailis

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and the other Indian communities on the other. Secondly it points to a clear determination on the part of the Ismailis to maintain their own exclusive identity. Thirdly, it throws light, interestingly enough, on the weight and prestige of the Aga Khan among high circles in the Imperial government. It was the Aga Khan's influence and the feeling on the part of the British authorities that in view of imperial interests it was necessary to maintain cordial relations with the Aga Khan owing to the weight of his political activities, which enabled the Ismailis to get their own way. As a government-agent in Zanzibar noted, with an undercurrent of bitterness, in his letter to Sir Edward Grey, top circles in the home-government had been drawn into the dispute over the head of the Consul-General, while the latter and the island authorities had been treated as inconsequential juniors: "Here were such high personages as the Aga Khan, the Viceroy of India, the Secretary of State for India and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs all put to trouble ...."[79] The outcome of this row was that the Zanzibar authorities, under pressure from the Aga Khan and the Indian Government as well as the Foreign Office, were forced to give in to the demand of the Ismailis. A renewed outbreak of friction in 1923 led to the Aga Khan taking up the case once again on behalf of his community on the island, and in 1925 the

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matter was finally settled to the satisfaction of the Ismailis. A similar pattern of events also arose in the other parts of East Africa. In Uganda, for example, the government's suggestion in 1925 that a common piece of land be alloted to all Muslims in Kampala for burial of their dead drew an immediate protest from the Ismailis, who reminded the administration of their separate identity, and of the fact that the judgement of the Bombay High Court Case in 1866 had established that the Aga Khan was the sole legal owner of all communal lands. Here, again, the administration had eventually to give way, and the principle of separate cemeteries was established.[80] A similar proposal on the part of the authorities in connection with sites for building mosques led to opposition on the same lines, and again the government had to give way to demands for separate recognition on the part of each of the Indian communities.

Another matter which provoked strong feelings of a similar kind was education. The Indians in all the East African territories had always felt strongly about the Colonial governments' neglect of the education of their children. In fact, education in East Africa in the early days of its development had been left entirely to the initiative of the missionaries. Naturally, the missionaries were little concerned about the Indians and

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instead confined their work to the Africans. As a result, Indian education on the whole failed to receive attention on anything like the scale the Indians felt it deserved, and the building of schools was therefore left to the initiative of the various Indian communities. The early Indian schools were thus run on a basis of self-help and through the philanthropy of individual Indian merchants. As the population, grew, however, the task of running such schools became increasingly difficult, and the East African governments began to realize the pressing need for the Indians to be helped in maintaining adequate educational facilities for their children. The government's recognition of its duty towards Indian education in East Africa was particularly marked in the 1920's, when they declared themselves willing to sponsor schools for the Indian community as a whole, and also promised grants-in-aid. As a first step in this process, and with a view to obtaining suggestions from the Indian leaders regarding this proposal, advisory committees consisting of government officials and Indian nominees were set up in all the East African territories. The Ismailis, however, immediately made it clear that they did not consider themselves bound by the policies of such committees, especially in view of proposals for common schools for all Indians. To them, the idea of

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sending their children to mixed schools was wholly unacceptable. They had so far sought successfully to retain their separate identity, which, however, they felt was threatened by this policy. One of the matters about which they felt strongly was religious education, which they thought was essential if true understanding of their historical doctrines was to be transmitted to their new generation. As the Aga Khan had explained in a letter to Sir James Duboulay, there were "real and historical causes that make my people in Africa insist on 'separatism'. They will not want any grant for their schools from Government, but they will not go to mixed schools either."[81] Moreover, the Aga Khan, in accordance with his policy of modernizing the social and economic life of his followers, was ardently trying to impress upon them a new outlook towards the secular order in order to enable them to adjust.themselves to their new encironment. Education, they felt, was supremely essential in this task, and the Ismailis were afraid that the standards and quality of educationin mixed Indian schools would fall short of the ideal they were aiming for. They therefore insisted that the authorities ought to recognize and give aid to their own separate schools. Eventually, the authorities had to give way, and the Ismailis developed a number of schools of their own in all

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the important centres in East Africa where their communities were to be found. Several observers noted that these schools successfully maintained impressive and commendable standards.[82]

Finally, we need to discuss another important policy move on the part of the Colonial administration in opposition to which the Ismailis developed an additional incentive for undertaking important organizational changes. In 1924 in order to facilitate negotiations concerning communal and religious property, the administration in Uganda asked the Hindus and the Muslims in the country to consider establishing a central trust for each religion, wherein all the property of the various communities could be vested. For they felt that prolifer - ation of religious and charitable organizations was undesirable. To the Ismailis, this move was tantamount to a modification of the absolute authority of their Imam, in whose name all communal property was vested by law, and whose supreme power over the affairs of the community had been recognized by the court-suits in Bombay. They, therefore, opposed the suggestion most vehemently, and pointed out that in no circumstances could the absolute jurisdiction of the Imam over communal property and over the social and economic affairs of the community be compromised. The attempt on the part of the

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administration to set up a common religious trust thus proved abortive. The Ismailis had, in all these issues, successfully surmounted the threats to their sense of social identity, which, as the years went by, became increasingly secure and consolidated. What is more, in their efforts to withstand attempts to assimilate them into a larger, vague, and all-inclusive Indian group, and in order to be able to deal with the British administration in matters affecting the status of the community, they developed a highly elaborate bureaucratic organization, which could meet and negotiate with the Colonial administration in its own style. On their part, the various governments were duly satisfied with this arrangement, which meant greater facility and less waste of time in their dealings with this rapidly expanding and prosperous community.[83]

In this way over the course of the following decades, the Ismailis were able to develop a highly systematic organization which was better adapted to the East African social environment. In doing so, however, they had to detach themselves from the other Indian communities. None of the other Indian groups achieved the same elaborate degree of organization, but the precedent set by the Ismailis made the inherent distinctions between the various communities more conspicuous. In the early

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years of their settlement in East Africa, the fact that their numbers were few discouraged the Indian communities from wanting to organize themselves on separate lines. However, the Ismailis were conscious of their distinctive identity from the very first, and when the colonial policies discussed above posed a threat to this vital sense of identity, the ideal of self-sufficiency that had hitherto been confined to their doctrinal frame-work was now translated into a reality through an effective organization. The network of councils developed by them over the course of years, linking the various Ismaili groups scattered throughout East Africa, created in these groups an awareness of belonging to one single community, and the tenacity that this fostered was an additional factor disengaging them from the other Indians. Eventually, the British authorities were forced to come to terms with the fact that a united Indian community was no more than what H.S. Morris calls a "polite fiction".[84] Nevertheless, it should be noted that while the Ismailis through their own internal organization and distinctive religious beliefs and practices came to be detached from the other Indian groups, they did not entirely sever their ties with them. Indeed, in some important respects, the Indian community continued to function as a whole.

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Certain conjoint bodies such as the Chambers of Commerce and other associations continued to function in the various territories. The membership of various advisory boards also comprised representatives from the different communities. The Ismailis continued to associate themselves with these bodies. However, only a few leaders served on these bodies in individual capacities on account of their prestige and experience, and the community as a whole was not involved. To a large extent, of course, the situation was inevitable, for the unique nature of their religious doctrines was a cause rather than a result of their separation from the other Indians. As a matter of fact, the question of having to renounce their own doctrines in order to assimilate themselves to a larger Indian community never really arose, for the situation was far more complex. For one thing, the essential uniqueness of the Ismaili beliefs had been a distinguishing mark of the community from the very beginning. What is even more important to remember, however, is that there was no question of assimilation into a larger Indian community simply because the complex diversity of the Indian groups in East Africa ruled out the possibility of such a community materializing in the first place.

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It now remains for us in the light of the foregoing discussion, to summarize the sociological status of the Ismailis in the East African situation. H.S. Morris has interpreted the situation from a most interesting angle through the use of the concept of "Plural Society", which enables the social relationships between the various ethnic groups in East Africa to be understood from a specific theoretical view-point.[85] The concept "Plural Society" was first used by J.S. Furnivall when he noted the existence of societies in which various sections "live side by side and mix, but do not combine".[86] The "Plural Society" is thus a model against which multi-racial and multi-cultural societies may be analysed from a specific sociological view-point. According to Morris, the East African people could be considered as a "plural Society" of which the Indians formed one section. Within the Indian community, furthermore, he considered the Ismailis as what he calls a "pace-making group."[87] According to him, the Ismailis not only succeeded in establishing a separate and distinctive identity vis-a-vis the other Indians, but also, by their example, encouraged the other Indian communities to attempt to do the same. Speaking about the attitude of the other Indian communities to the organizational changes undertaken by the Ismailis under the leadership of the Aga

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Khan, Morris notes that "the other Indians in East Africa have watched this development guided by the wisdom and experience of a very great man indeed, with a mixture of envy and horror; and the Hindus and other Muslims alike have attempted, for the most part unsuccessfully, to copy the organization in their own caste and sectarian communities."[88]

We shall now briefly consider the political attitudes of the Ismailis in East Africa, to complete this picture of their relationship towards the different groups constituting their social environment in the period under consideration. The history of the colonial government in East Africa, especially in Kenya, was marked by frequent conflicts between the Indian population and the British administration. These conflicts reflected a deep and underlying state of tension which in Kenya was mainly the result of government policies of restricting the sale of land-holdings to non-European claimants. The extreme fertility of the highlands in Kenya, which later came to be known as the "White Highlands," was responsible for discriminatory measures from which Tanganyika and Uganda went free, though in the latter countries occasional dissatisfaction with measures that affected the Indian population adversely was by no means

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unheard of. It was not, however, until the years following the First World War that, in Kenya at least, measures which were officially approved and which drastically restricted the rights of Indians to buy and own land came into being. This led to vehement protests from Indian leaders and to a general state of increased tension.

As for the Ismailis, there is a certain sense in which one cannot justifiably speak of their over-all attitude to these political developments. To ask what was the political philosophy of the Ismaili community as a collective whole would be asking the wrong question. In fact, none of the various Indian communities in East Africa could be said to have participated in national politics as a collective whole. No doubt, several leaders who held positions of prestige within their own respective communities were most active and vociferous figures in the political scene of the Colonial days, but they spoke and acted only in their individual capcaities. At the most, they turned for a substantial part of their support to members of their own communities. Moreover, the active help and service such leaders devoted to their own community reflected their concern for their own fellow members. While in one sense therefore they could

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be said to represent their community, they were certainly anything but the collective voice of the community personified. The fact that several Ismaili leaders were included in the category of the Indian leaders who played an active part in protesting against measures affecting the Indian community adversely, and that their role did not in any way embody the role of their community in any organized or determined manner, is thus a matter of no particular surprise. It is also important to note that the Aga Khan himself was most actively involved in international politics. He was closely associated with the government of India, and several times acted as the spokesman of Muslim demands for separate representation.[89] While on one hand he took for granted the principle of imperial government in India, he was also an influential spokesman for Indian grievances. In East Africa, too, the Indians turned to him on occasions when they thought that his standing with the British Authorities and his important position in international politics might add valuable weight to their campaign against discriminatory policies regarding land, immigration, etc. Thus in 1905, the Indians in Kenya approached him with the request that he use his influence to persuade the British government to allocate upland farms for Indian settlement. His advice to those who sought his opinion over the Kenya dispute was

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that they should make their demands known in a "moderate" and constitutional manner. In fact, he conceived of his own political standpoint as one of "moderation". Thus in 1923, when the Kenya dispute was at its height, he sent a telegram to the Indian community advising them to refrain from doing "anything illegal or unconstitutional".[90] And yet what is most significant is that the Aga Khan's political career did not reflect the organized viewpoint of his community as a whole. In itself, this is not so surprising as it may appear on first sight. For one of the apparently paradoxical features of the Ismaili belief in the Imāmat is that while it is incumbant upon them to obey their Imam, his own activities are not strictly relevant to them. Notwithstanding the risk of over-simplification, this aspect of the Ismaili's attitude towards the Imam may be stated thus: for the Ismailis, the Imam is a guide rather than an exemplar. Despite this, however, it is highly surprising that such an organized community, in which almost all the needs of the members were catered for, did not adopt any definite or collective political standpoint on the whole. As we have already seen, the Ismailis were not an exception in the political scene of those days in this respect. Ironically enough, if there was any aspect of life in which the Indians in East Africa did not pursue an approach

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reflecting their crystallization into separate communities (though this does not automatically imply the existence of a unified community), it was politics. The point of surprise, therefore, is not why the Ismailis were unlike other communities in this respect, but why they were like them. For indeed it would be no matter for surprise if the course the Ismaili community took in this respect was unlike that adopted by the others. On the contrary, for a people who were so used to thinking and acting as a collective whole, one would expect a determined and definite political programme. The solution to this apparent paradox lies, at least in part, in recognizing that it was because the Ismailis were so politically organized that they could afford to ignore the politics of the country in which they lived. In saying that the Ismaili community was "politically organized", of course, we are using the term "political" in the widest possible sense. It would be helpful here to note Schapera's definition of the political organization of a society as "that aspect of the total organisation which is concerned with the establishment and maintenance of internal co-operation and external independence."[91] If this definition is adapted for our purpose here, it describes in a most vivid and precise manner the type of organization which eventually emerged in the Ismaili community in East

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Africa. It seems that the predominant drive among the Ismailis under the leadership of the Aga Khan III consisted in a search for self-sufficiency. It is this which led them to devise a suitable mechanism which would best enable the community to adapt itself to the country of their adoption. This pre-occupation with self-sufficiency and the drive towards maximum prosperity and well-being for each individual member of the community, precluded any direct participation in the politics of the country on a collective basis. Ironically enough, part of the impetus to the rapid growth of a systematic and bureaucratic organization in the community lay in the policies of the Colonial administration. It would not be far-fetched to suggest, therefore, that the organizational set-up which emerged in the community from the 1920's onwards was an act at once of deference and defiance - deference towards the demand on the part of the authorities for efficient and recognized local spokesmen with whom they could communicate easily, and defiance against the move to assimilate them into a vague and all-inclusive category such as "Indians" or "Asians". Thus, one of the secondary and indirect results of these developments was the fact that a community whose spiritual ancestors, the Fatimids and later, the Assassins, had so deliberately sought political ascendancy as a major part of their programme, were to

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prosper within a supremely self-contained unit which was markedly detached from the political developments around them. On the other hand, a factor making for still greater complexity in the study of the political attitude of the Ismailis during this period is their striking adaptation to the respective East African territories. Once again, the paradox is only an apparent one. For it would amount to an over-simplification, and indeed, to a distortion of the true picture if the relationship of the Ismailis to the country was not distinguished from their relationship to the ruling power and the politics associated with it. The Aga Khan had always been exhorting his followers to regard the country of their adoption as a permanent home. Thus, coupled with the severance of physical and ultimately, as we shall see, cultural ties with India, and the resulting shift of emphasis onto the East African countries, was an indifference to the politics in the Colonial period. The two attitudes did not have to exist in spite of each other; in an important sense, they were there because of each other.

While the attitude of the Ismailis to the prevailing government was characterized more by indifference than anything else, and while their dominant concern was internal solidarity, one may wonder how they responded to the impact of scientific and

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technological aspects of Western culture. Indeed, the impact of these aspects of Western culture - an impact which was enhanced through the process of colonization as well as the development of effective communications between different parts of the world - has raised grave issues for contemporary Muslim societies all over the world. The necessity of fashioning a clear and adequate response - as much out of a spirit of defence, incidentally, as of defiance - has been felt strongly in all Muslim countries. The ideational aspect of such a response on the part of the Ismailis will concern us only in the next chapter. Here, however, it is important for us to note just as much about their response to this challenge as would enable us to understand the organization that emerged as part of the answer. It is in this sphere that one of the most revolutionary changes in contemporary Ismailism can be seen. It was essentially a change in values. Briefly speaking, it consisted not so much in an abandonment of old values but in the adoption of new ones. Many old values were retained, and the new ones were harmonized with these existing values with a view to developing a new outlook towards the world. One cannot over-emphasize here the vital role of the Aga Khan III in this respect. In fact, it was only due to his leadership that this profound and almost dramatic alteration in the Ismailis'

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basic attitude towards life took place. When it is realized to what extent the Ismailis turn to the Imam for advice concerning important changes in his life, and when the Aga Khan III's own outlook on life is borne in mind, such a rapid and profound change ceases to be a wonder. The Aga Khan's own attitude was one of hearty appreciation of what he called the "innocent pleasures" of life. In particular, he had a most ardent admiration for the scientific fruits of western culture - modern methods of medicine and social welfare, modern principles of education, etc. Acting out of the belief that these fruits of modern scientific research ought to be integrated with traditional values - a belief which he cherished most zealously throughout his life - he caused the social life of his followers in East Africa to be revolutionized. The system of organization that came into being in their century was in a large measure aimed at incorporating these new values, and making available to the individual members of the community, the amenities of life which their Imam had recommended so ardently.

Over the course of the previous discussion, we have found it necessary to take note of the various factors which served as a combined stimulus in the evolution of the Ismailis into a highly corporate and organized group.

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The repercussions of the events marking the changing relationship of the Ismailis to the other groups domiciled in East Africa were to a certain extent reflected in the organization. In its turn, the organizational development reflected the shifting zones in the relationship of the community to the various groups forming its social milieu. Some of the essential factors which acted as a basic driving-force in this process belong to the doctrinal system of the community, and will not be discussed till in the next chapter. Here we shall be content with examining the actual organization that transformed the Ismaili settlers in East Africa into a highly institutionalized group, satisfying their important needs in the multifarious fields over which their interests came to be extended as part of their determined attempt to adapt themselves to their new environment.

A first step in the development of an extensive network of links integrating the various clusters of Ismaili settlers into a corporate and effectively organized body was the migration of large groups of individual families from crowded towns on the coast into the various centres in the interior. The Aga Khan was very insistent that his followers should penetrate into the interior and establish trading enterprises in the

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areas that were being opened up. Emigration from the coastal settlements into the towns in the interior, and from the towns into rural areas, was thus a strongly stressed priority in the programme of organizing the Ismailis into a more efficient and prosperous body of people. It figured prominently in the Aga Khan's own advices to his followers when he visited them. Moreover, he was particularly indignant at the fact that a large number of his followers had remained in Zanzibar, where they had settled in the previous century after migrating from India. Accordingly, he repeatedly advised them to quit Zanzibar owing to the danger of its economic decline through competition and depletion of its resources. He also laid the duty of giving organized aid to groups of Ismailis willing to migrate to the mainland on the various councils or administrative bodies which he had appointed in order to carry out the day to day management of community affairs. It was in 1926 that the Imam took a markedly serious view of the situation and insisted that emigration from the island was a dire necessity, and that a substantial number of Ismailis should spread out into the mainland territories. To his followers living in Bagamoyo (whose importance had steadily declined since the turn of the century), he explained that abandoning a place when trade opportunities

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declined was but a natural and right thing to do, for they should take such fluctuations for granted. He was particularly optimistic about the scope of opportunities offered by Tanganyika (which had become a mandated territory after the war, and where, unlike Kenya, there were no crippling restrictions on Indian settlement and trade). He also recommended those who could to emigrate to Kenya and even to Central Africa. Similarly, during his visit to Nairobi, he advised those who found themselves economically in a marginal position to emigrate to Kampala and other parts of Uganda, as well as to Tanganyika, to Congo, etc.

During his next visit to East Africa in 1937, one of the important themes in the Aga Khan's advice to his followers was the further necessity of emigrating from the towns where they had settled into rural areas. Once again, he reminded his followers in Zanzibar of the need to leave the island. During his next and last visit to the country in 1945-46, the Aga Khan stressed even more strongly the necessity on the part of his followers to emigrate into the trading centres which were opening up in the interior. The Ismailis being merchants by tradition, the policy was to curtail their concentration in the urban areas by sending members of families who were

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not strictly needed in the towns, into the rural areas. Thus the Aga Khan considered it crucially important that the Ismailis should avoid concentrating in a few crowded towns, hence, during this visit, he recommended an organized programme to bring this about. At an Economic Conference held at Dar-es-Salam, he advocated the formation of a separate committee to supervise a scheme to help Ismaili families in Zanzibar to emigrate to inland areas in Tanganyika and elsewhere. In the various towns he visited, he strongly criticized the lure of urban life that caused many families to remain in cities. He exhorted them to be more adventurous and to consider as their chief mission the development of the interior through trade (the settlements in the interior usually began as trading centres following the establishment of government posts). He wished the Ismaili traders would take the lead in introducing essential goods into the interior, thus bringing about an over-all development, and deprecated the temptation to lead a luxurious life in the cities, with all the attendant comforts. He also advised his followers living in cities like Nairobi to spread out into more inland areas such as the Lake District. In the 1950's through frequent messages to the community sent through the local heads, he suggested that those families whose

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economic position in the towns was unsatisfactory or precarious, should migrate to the then Belgian Congo, which was still in the process of development. In this way, again, the prevalence of large or joint families was discouraged, for young members who were not indispensable to their family concerns, were encouraged to open up branches in other areas rather than being a burden on their families by staying with them and thus causing a waste of man-power. The over-all effect of this was that there was a gradual extension of Ismaili concerns all over East Africa and, eventually, to other areas such as Congo, West Africa and Madagascar. One may wonder whether this movement by Ismaili families into the relatively remote centres in East Africa and even beyond the East African frontiers, did not lead to a corresponding dissipation and weakening of their sense of belonging to a distinct community. That this did not happen, and that, if anything, there was an increasing sense of solidarity over the years, was due to the extension of an elaborate network of organization which we shall now examine.

First of all, it is necessary to bear in mind that though there is a dimension of historical awareness in contemporary Ismailism which stretches back over a considerable period of time, the emergence and rapid growth

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of the community in East Africa was in an important sense a new start. At least on the concrete level of social organization, the developments in East Africa involved a process of breaking fresh ground. A new opportunity for inaugurating an era of solidarity and prosperity had presented itself, and was indeed successfully exploited. As a result, whatever fragmentation or sectional feelings derived from geographical differences may have existed in India, they were eliminated in the new setting, where the old differences turned out to be redundant. In the early years, no doubt, sectional feelings, especially between those migrants who had come from Kutch and those who had come from Kathiawar, had persisted. The Imam, however, instilled into his followers a remarkable sense of unity and common belonging, and over the course of years, such sectional feelings disappeared. The groundwork for an impressive demonstration of social solidarity had thus been established. It now remained for the community to organize itself effectively enough in order to fulfil the religious, social, and economic needs of its members.

From the very beginning, the Aga Khan's express policy regarding his followers in East Africa had been to create an effective mechanism for settling disputes within the community. This amounted, in fact, to the creation of a means of solving civil disputes on the same lines as

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those followed in courts of law. It also necessitated the creation of a body of rules which would guide the conduct of the members of the community, a definite set of sanctions for punishing breach of these rules, and an administrative council for enforcing conformity to the laws and punishing deviance within the powers allocated to it by the Imam. Thus, during his visit to Zanzibar in 1899, the Aga Khan impressed upon his followers the value of arbitration as a means of settling disputes within the community. During his second visit to Zanzibar, in 1905, the Imam personally presided over the compilation of a detailed body of rules which was published as the official constitution of the community. Again, as we have already seen, it was in this year that the Aga Khan executed a power of attorney appointing three of his followers as his administrative representatives in community affairs. It is also interesting to note that the system of councils followed the "natural" pattern of the development of towns on the coast and in the interior, and of their fluctuating importance. Thus the council at Zanzibar retained a predominant importance for a long time. In 1924 the system of councils was extended to the mainland, and in two years' time, there were separate councils for Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda, in addition to Zanzibar. From then on, the system of councils and the rules governing the conduct of Ismailis in matters

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affecting the community, were periodically altered or modified with a view to keeping abreast of general changes. In 1954, a "Federal Council" having jurisdiction over all the communities in Africa and co-ordinating the work of the various councils in different regions had come into existence. Under it, there were "Supreme Councils" in Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda South Africa, Portuguese East Africa, and Madagascar, respectively. Under the jurisdiction of each Supreme Council were a number of "Provincial Councils" exercising authority in each province or district. In 1962, a new constitution (which is currently in force) was issued. The system of councils remained mostly the same, except that the highest ranking council was now known as the "Supreme Council" and there were ten "Territorial Councils", for Kenya, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Uganda, Congo, Ruanda, Burundi, Malgasy Republic, and Portuguese East Africa, respectively. (After the union of Zanzibar with Tanganyika, the Council at Zanzibar was merged with that at Tanganyika, to form a single Territorial Council.) The most striking feature of the new constitution, however, was the allocation of the responsibility for hearing and settling disputes to bodies known as "tribunals", which were independent of the councils. Like the councils, these "tribunals" were

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ranked in a hierarchical manner, on the provincial, territorial and inter-territorial levels, respectively. There was also a careful and well-defined distribution of functions and powers, and an elaborate code of rules, with detailed instructions determining the procedure in regard to meetings, etc. Apart from this, the new constitution included a detailed and well-defined category of "Personal Law", comprising rules governing such matters as marriage, divorce, guardianship, adoption, inheritance, apostasy, etc.[92] The officials on these bodies were appointed by the Imam, at least nominally if not in fact, for the names were forwarded to him by the local leaders. All the constitutions in question always reserved supreme power for the Imam, who alone was above the law in force in the community.

Another striking feature of the emergence of the Ismaili community as a highly organized body fulfilling the secular needs of the members, was the emphasis placed on education, and the establishment of schools. The Aga Khan III had campaigned vigorously for schools capable of imparting secular education on modern lines to Ismaili children. He conceived of education as an essential condition for the community's survival in East Africa. His grandson who succeeded him as Imam (i.e. the present Aga Khan) emphasized it even more strongly as a supreme

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value in itself, which it was imperative for every Ismaili to strive for. Education of girls had also been particularly stressed, with the result that the schools generally contained an equal number of boys and girls. As we have seen earlier, the Ismailis had established separate schools for their community from the beginning, thus dissociating themselves from the government-run schools for Indian children at large. In addition, there was also a gradual emergence of parents' association and other bodies conceived on modern lines, and a fixed number of bursaries were allocated by the Imam to support students at University level. In the last decade, educational programmes have been considerably expanded. By 1960, there were 60 Ismaili schools in Tanganyika and more than 35 in Kenya and Uganda.[93] The general supervision of all educational institutions has been in the hands of "Education Administrators" for the various territories, who are directly responsible to the Aga Khan. Under the jurisdiction of the "Education Administrators" are "Provincial Education Boards". The creation of a separate organization charged with responsibility regarding educational matters, reflects the special importance given to education and the large number of schools needing administrative supervision.

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A similar degree of emphasis was placed on measures designed to improve standards of health and medical treatment in the community. In several important towns, the Ismaili community built hospitals, dispensaries, and clinics entirely through local Ismaili support and grants allocated by the Aga Khan. At Nairobi, a new hospital with up to date facilities was erected in 1958. As Honorary Chairman of the African Research Foundation, the present Aga Khan also sought to associate the hospital more closely with medical research. He also launched an Insurance scheme whereby the members of the community paid a premium of £4 per year and were insured up to £250 worth of medical treatment.[94] Other institutions financed by the community include sports clubs, maternity and paediatric clinics, etc.

Another field in which major changes took place over the course of years was the economic one. In the earliest years of their settlement, the Ismailis were either small-scale traders or entrepreneurs on a larger scale. The Aga Khan's policy was to unite them into stronger bodies that could withstand competition from other communities. On the whole, the general policy was to maintain the traditional hold of the community over commercial enterprise. Thus in the period after the second world war, the Imam was upset by the growing

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numbers of people who were tempted to undertake clerical and professional jobs on a scale that he felt was a cause for serious concern. For he felt that the reluctance to undertake business enterprise and the lure of less tasking occupations which guaranteed a fixed and regular pay might deprive the community of the very backbone of its economic strength. During this period, therefore, there was an accleration of commercial activity on a large-scale basis. There was also a shift of emphasis in the type of commercial activity that was felt to be appropriate in the light of the economic and political conditions of the day. It was recognized that the old type of enterprise, in which the buyer waited for the seller to make known his demand, was fast becoming an inefficient and obsolete mode of trade. Thus there was a new emphasis on the need for travelling salesmen who advertised their goods and surveyed the market systematically as a preliminary step in extending their businesses, and the various councils were instructed to keep in touch with such experienced salesmen in order to disseminate their findings among the communities in different areas. Moreover, the Aga Khan repeatedly tried to impress upon his followers the necessity of joint enterprises on a collective scale. To this end, he recommended the formation of wholesalers' associations and import- export corporations. Moreover, under his

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direction and encouragement, a series of co-operative societies sprang up all over East Africa. By eliminating middle men's profits and giving an opportunity to a number of heads for pulling their resources, these societies led to an increased sense of solidarity in the economic life of the community. Even more far-reaching was the creation of a huge insurance company with headquarters at Mombasa and branches in the important centres of East Africa, and the "Diamond Jubilee Investment Trust". The latter was the outcome of the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Imāmat of the Aga Khan, when he was weighed against diamonds by the followers in Pakistan, India, as well as East Africa. The value of these diamonds was unconditionally presented to the Imam as a gift by his followers. The Aga Khan returned the value to the community, and advocated the formation of a central trust which would lend money at low interest to the various co-operative societies that were springing up at this time, and other organizations such as banks and building societies. These organizations in turn lent capital at low interest to private individuals, who wished to establish new concerns or extend existing ones. At about the same time, the Aga Khan made periodic farmāns urging his followers to observe the strictest economy in daily life. Although this had been a regular theme in his farmāns, it was especially emphasized during the war

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years and the period immediately following the war, as a preventive measure against the effects of the post-war depression. Members of the community were also recommended to deposit the money thus saved in the Investment Trust, with a view to benefitting the share-holders themselves, as well as the community at large. These two institutions thus turned out to be the mainstay of the community's collective economic progress, and became visible and outstanding reflections of the prosperity it had achieved over the years. One of the projects which came to be popular and well-known among the members of the community, and which was also financed by the central company, was the "Homes for All" project. This came into existence as the result of the Aga Khan III's insistence that every member of the community ought to be the owner of a flat or a house. Accordingly, a number of locally-formed building societies came into existence and they were lent the necessary capital for purchasing and developing housing estates, by the central company. The tenant-purchasers made a deposit with the local building corporation, and over a period of not more than 16 years the ownership of their respective houses passed into their hands through the payment of monthly instalments. The scheme came to fruition during the early years of the Imāmat of the present Aga Khan. Finally, another striking testimony to the community's

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growing trend of undertaking large-scale ventures was provided by the establishment of the Industrial Promotion Services by the present Aga Khan in 1963. The company has as its aim the provision of expert technical advice for industrial projects, the dissemination of information regarding technological progress in various parts of the world, and is run in partnership with the governments concerned. It was also deliberately created with a view to translating in economic terms the official policy of the community, initiated by the Imam, to identify itself with the interests of the country in the post-independence phase. At the same time, the present Aga Khan has been advising his followers to move out of retail trade where he felt the field would have to be cleared for the Africans, and has been urging them to pursue higher education as a fundamental priority. The emphasis has thus to a large extent shifted from commerce to professional education, with teaching, medicine, engineering and other scientific skills recommended most strongly.

On the whole, therefore, during the period of the Imamat of the Aga Khan III and the present Aga Khan, the Ismailis have developed into a highly corporate and organized body which presents a striking contrast with the situation in the early years of their settlement in East Africa. This vivid and striking growth in the organization of the community is the feature which has

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been most conspicuous in the eyes of observers. For it is this aspect of the community in East Africa that has led it to be called "the best-organized and most progressive Muslim community in the country."[95] Other writers have made comments of an exactly similar nature.[96] It is interesting to note that although the Ismailis in India and Pakistan are organized on lines similar to those in East Africa, the communities in the Middle Eastern and Far Eastern countries have a highly traditional form of organization. In the Aga Khan's own words, "the leadership of a religious community spread over a considerable part of the world-surface - from Cape Town to Kashgar, from Syria to Singapore - cannot be sustained in accordance with any cut-and-dried system. Moral conditions, material facilities, national aspirations and outlook, and profoundly differing historical backgrounds have to be borne vastly in mind, and the necessary mental adjustments made."[97] Thus, "in Central Asia the leadership of the Ismailis is an inheritance in the hands of certain families, and has been handed down in continuous line through centuries. This is true of my followers in Afghanistan, and in Persia and Chinese Turkestan, where certain families have been since their conversion to Islam, administrators and representatives of the Imam. The local leadership passes down in a close

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connection of kinship from one generation to another... In Baghdad I have special representatives who deal with Arabian matters; in Iran I have special representatives in every province who deal with Ismaili affairs, who are also generally members of families that have as a matter of inheritance supplied local Ismaili leaders probably as long as these people have been linked with my family. In Syria, one such family of representatives has retained an unbroken connection with my family for more than a thousand years."[98] On the other hand, in East Africa, as we have seen, "there is a highly developed and civilized administrative system of councils, educational administrators, property agents, executive and judicial councils all performing an immense amount of day-to-day administrative work, and under my general orders vast financial administration as well."[99] This indicates clearly that the organization of the Ismailis into a highly corporate group in East Africa has to be treated as a <u>variable</u>, whose origins have to be located in the peculiar conditions of the East African milieu. Undoubtedly, the latent potential for such a development which was intrinsic in the exclusive nature of Ismaili doctrines should not be overlooked. The immediate and concrete impetus to the development, however, was provided by the essential features of the

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East African social climate which we have discussed above. Moreover, the organized set-up of the community was the main feature which set it so noticeably apart from the other Indian communities. For although some of the other Indian communities developed organizations of their own, most of these embraced only the members living within a particular town. Thus there were relatively much weaker links between the members of the particular communities in question, living in different places in East Africa. Furthermore, the specialized departments that emerged in the Ismaili community, with definite administrative functions and devolution of responsibilities were entirely lacking in the case of the others.

Having discussed at some length the social dynamics of the interaction of the Ismailis with the other Indian groups that constituted part of their social milieu in East Africa, and the corresponding emergence of a highly intricate organization within the community, we shall now go on to examine their relationship to other Muslim groups in the country. If in the case of the Indian communities we can discern a movement towards the affirmation of a separate identity on the part of the Ismailis (although, as we have seen, there was still a certain area within which the channels of communication were left open), one

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cannot but be struck by a contrary process in the case of the various Muslim groups in the country. For, as the years went by, and the identity of the community had been securely consolidated, the Ismailis, under the direction of the Aga Khan III and his successor the present Aga Khan, diverted part of their resources to maintaining and strengthening those institutions which were aimed at the welfare of the Muslims as a whole. Indeed, in an important sense, the relationship between the Ismailis and the other Indian communities on one hand, and the Muslim communities on the other, can be considered parallel to each other, with an important difference in the level of the two relationships. For both the Indians and the Muslims, the Ismailis in a certain sense provided a lead. In the case of the former, as H.S. Morris observes, the Ismailis were a "pace-making" group; in the case of the latter, the Ismaili community, or rather the Aga Khan, came to be regarded as a beneficiary. Thus, in the case of the former, the Ismailis were "leaders" (i.e. "pace-makers") owing to the conscious or unconscious decision by the other Indian communities to emulate them. In the case of the latter, they were leaders out of their, or at least the Aga Khan's deliberate policy to give a lead. Thus in the case of the Indians, the Ismailis emerged as "leaders" out of anything

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but conscious choice; in the case of the Muslims, every aspect of the relationship was consciously determined. Of course, the parallel between the two spheres of relationship is not perfect and the scope for comparison and contrast is accordingly limited. Nevertheless, it is a useful mode of interpretation, provided that the many differences between the two zones of interaction are borne in mind.

In order to understand the type of Muslim institutions that have emerged in recent decades, and to which the Ismailis have given their support, it is necessary to have in mind some basic facts about the variety of Muslim communities that have settled in East Africa. Broadly speaking, the Muslims in East Africa can be divided into three categories: the Arabs and the coastal Swahili population which has developed a distinctive Islamic sub-culture; the African Muslims such as the Baganda; and the Indian immigrant groups, a majority of whom belong to the Shī'a sects. The Swahili culture is the result of the synthesis of Islamic culture as represented in Southern Arabia, and indigenous Bantu languages, beliefs, and practices. In a sense, the Arabic stamp has been paramount and there was a marked tendency in the past for some of the less

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integrated stocks to look seaward to Arabia as "home". The Qur'ān is usually taught in special schools and Arabic has had a marked aura of prestige around it. Almost all of the Swahilis follow the Shāfi'ite school of law. In the case of the African groups in the interior which have embraced Islam, there has been the growth not so much of a distinct sub-culture but of a pluralism in religious practices - that is to say, a great many elements of indigenous African religion have been retained alongside those adopted from Islam. The extent and nature of this pluralism varies in different areas of the country. Widely different from these two Muslim groups are the Indian Muslims, whose religious life and social organization is of an exclusive and closed nature. Furthermore, their predominant interest and activity are confined to their own communities which differ from one another in the degree of their corporateness. The bulk of the Sunnī Indian Muslims follow the Hanafī school of law. The majority of the Indian Muslims, however, are Shī'a of one of the following three important sects: (1) The Ismailis, (2) the Ithna'asheris (many of whom had originally been Ismailis and who left or were forced to leave the community during the early series of secessions) and (3) the Bohras, who are descendants of the Hindus converted to the Musta'lian form of Ismailism in India

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several centuries ago. The numerical proportion of each of these groups is shown in Table I.

As is evident from what has been said above, Islam in East Africa is a remarkably heterogenous faith. For one to anticipate anything near a united Islamic front, therefore, would be most far-fetched. In fact, sensitivity to the differences among themselves on the part of most of the communities checked the development of any co-ordinated Muslim endeavour. In the decades following the second world war, however, there was an attempt, especially on the part of the African Muslim to devote increasingly serious attention to Islam as a force that could unite them and support their sense of identity in the midst of the uncertainties of the period. Part of the general sense of malaise among the Muslims during this time lay in the threat of secularization due to the impact of Western ideas. The necessity of sustaining the fast-vanishing traditional framework of Islam in the face of Western ideas of education was felt to be an urgent one. The Aga Khan had demonstrated the efficacy of his particular brand of Islam in the modern world through reforms within his own community, and he had no hesitation therefore in advocating a vigorous programme of Muslim welfare and education on modern lines. The

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main way in which he contributed to this resurgence of interest in Islam was through generous financial help. At the same time he urged his followers to extend their contacts with the other Muslim communities as a whole. Despite this, however, it is important to remember, firstly that participation in this general concern was discernible more in the personal role of the Aga Khan than in the collective endeavour of the community as a whole (and this notwithstanding the fact that certain leaders from the community were usually appointed by the Aga Khan to represent him, in matters regarding Muslim welfare, at the local level); and, secondly, that all in all, the enhanced links between the Ismailis and the Muslim groups were forged more on a formal and social (in fact superficial) plane rather than on a deeper ideational level.

The feeling that it was necessary for the various Muslim communities in East Africa to associate with each other more closely, and that that the Ismailis ought to play their due role in this process, was, as far as the Ismaili community was concerned, an inevitable sequel to their established prosperity. Once the dangers to their social identity in the second half of the nineteenth century (as reflected in the Khojā Case in India and the subsequent history of the secessions) had been

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successfully overcome, and once an era of prosperity had been inaugurated on this basis, it was natural that the Ismailis would turn their attention to closer association with those groups towards which they were encouraged by their faith to be well-disposed. Again, one of the changes the Ismailis underwent in East Africa consisted of a progressive elimination of Hindu relics inherited from their ethnic origins. One particular indication of this, for instance, was to be found in the fact that though most Ismailis had Hindu names at some point in their pedegree, these had been superseded by Muslim names of late. As far as the Aga Khan was concerned, of course, being of Persian birth and having been for long a promiment spokesman for the Muslims in India, Islam was an integral part of his personality. At the same time, it is important to remember that this particular phase of co-operation on the part of the Ismailis with the rest of the Muslims was directed as much towards their own ends as it was towards the benefit of the other communities in question. For this association gave them a valuable sense of security and what is more, helped to butress their sense of identity as Muslims. The Aga Khan was also a fervent advocate of the spirit of "Pan-Islamism", which was a concept uppermost in the aspirations of most Muslim leaders of the time. However,

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he was not of the opinion that such a movement should be a political one. Hence he recommended his followers to support the ideal on a non-political basis. The following is typical of the several messages he sent to the Ismailis and the Muslims in general on this theme: "I hope Ismailis will be the spearhead for the movement of the ITEHAD-I-ISLAM, otherwise known as Cultural, Religious and Economic PAN-ISLAMISM. Unless cultural, religious and economic union takes place between Muslim peoples, death will fall on them separately and individually. On the other hand, their political development must be the result of geography, and the general movement of nations within the United Nations of the world, as now started at Lake Success".[100] Similarly attempts on the part of his followers to establish good relations with the indigenous Muslims in their respective areas were acknowledged by messages or telegrams such as the following:

"Very glad to hear Zanzibar Council's reports towards unity and brotherhood with Arabian and African Muslims STOP Hope all Ismailis in Africa follow this good example ...."[101]

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The Aga Khan's most concrete contribution to the general resurgence of Islamic activity in East Africa at this period was through the East African Muslim Welfare Society, which was founded by him in 1945. To be sure, his association with African Muslims dated back to 1905 when he called a meeting of the Muslims in Uganda in Kampala, and discussed the state of Islam in Uganda with their representatives. He also met Prince Nuhu Mbogo, the traditional leader of the Muslims in Uganda, in the same year. Yet no concrete steps to bring the various Muslims under one banner had been contemplated till 1937, when the Aga Khan, visiting East Africa for his Golden Jubilee Celebrations, called a Round Table Conference of Muslims, launching the East African Muslim Welfare Society by personally donating a substantial sum to set the ball rolling. However, the work failed to get off to a satisfactory start, and so during his next visit to East Africa in 1945, the Aga Khan, chairing a conference of Muslim delegates of all sects and from all over East Africa at Mombasa, urged those who were present to consider the re-organization of the Muslims in the country as an urgent priority. Urging them to take all the necessary steps to check the decline of Islam in East Africa, he re-launched the East African Muslim Welfare Society by announcing that he would donate an equivalent sum to the total contribution collected from

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non-Ismaili Muslim donors. In subsequent years, the society established branches at the following centres in the three territories: Mombasa, Nairobi, and Kisumu in Kenya; Kampala, Jinja, Masaka, Mbale, Fort Portal and Soroti in Uganda; Dar-es-Salam, Moshi, Tanga, Dodoma, Lindi, Singida and Kigoma in Tanganyika. The office-bearers were drawn from all sects. However, presumably on account of their wealth and education, the Asian Muslims were predominant in the leadership. The functions that the society took upon itself over the course of years included tablig or preaching, building of mosques and maintenance of Qur'ān teachers, and the establishment of schools. The work was confined mostly to the African Muslims, and converts were recruited into Sunnī and not Shī'a Islam. In 1955, the Aga Khan stated in a message to the Muslims in East Africa:

"I appeal to the Muslims of all sections to look upon this society as a Pan-Islamic Brotherhood, working especially for the uplift of African Muslims, and the encouragement of mission efforts for the expansion of Islam to the African population."[102]

Some of the more prominent institutions put up by the society included the Kibuli mosque, the Kibuli primary school and the Kibuli teachers' training college at Kampala,

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the Jamiyya Mosque at Tanga, as well as a number of other mosques and schools at various centres in the three territories. The Aga Khan also contributed a major sum towards the erection of the Mombasa Institute of Muslim Education. It is also interesting to note that in such technical aspects of the building of these institutions as planning and architecture, the Ismailis contributed an element of "know how". In 1954 at the recommendation of the Aga Khan, a delegation of Muslim leaders from East Africa was sent to the West African countries to explore avenues for closer association between the Muslims in these two parts of the continent. The Aga Khan's message to the West African Muslims on this occasion stated that the first step in the encouragement of greater solidarity among Muslims "is to organize from time to time goodwill missions, such as the one now coming from East Africa to you, going from West Africa to East Africa, and, we hope, to Pakistan a little later."[103] The delegation reported the results of their visit to the Aga Khan at Evian les Bains, in France. A summary of the number of institutions put up by the society from the period of its inception till 1954 is reproduced in Table II.

The Aga Khan IV, who succeeded the Aga Khan III in 1957 continued to support the society, and until recently remained like his grandfather, its Patron-in Chief. In his

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speeches to the society during his visits to East Africa, he laid an increased emphasis on education, and urged the office-bearers of the society to pay more attention to a systematic programme of setting up adequate educational facilities where the quality and numbers of the teaching staff was given careful consideration. He also frequently dwelt upon the necessity of reconciling Islamic values to the secular ethos of the modern world.[104] Again, in a visit to Makerere University College in 1966, he urged the Muslim students there, and more specifically his own followers, to work in a new climate of harmony, for the traditional sectarian differences, he said, were fast becoming archaic and irrelevant. In a speech which marked an important change of outlook, he urged the Muslim students not to "rub salt into historical wounds".[105] In 1968, however, the Aga Khan resigned from his official capacity in the Welfare Society.

The founding of the East African Muslim Welfare Society and the Aga Khan's support for it is important in the interpretative framework of this study in as much as it is an evidence of a historical shift in the social identity of the Ismailis. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to interpret the change as an indication of any fundamental integration. It cannot be too strongly

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emphasized that in the doctrinal system and in the economic and social affairs of the community, the Ismailis have maintained a separate and exclusive identity. To a large extent, the closed nature of the Indian Muslim communities, as well as the diversity among the African Muslims together with differing educational standards, financial resources, and social organization of the various communities, and finally, the rise of African nationalism, have rendered such a united front an impossibility. Provided that the historical role of the Welfare Society is not over-exaggerated and provided, again, that the complexities involved in the assessment of its work in the East African situation are not ignored, the society's activities provide a useful clue to a phase of changing organization of Islam in East Africa. In this study, we have been concerned only with this aspect of the Aga Khan's role in East Africa in so far as it helps to throw light on the shifting interests of his community. As we shall see later, the urge to give greater importance to Islamic ideas was one of the important characteristics of Ismaili ideology in East Africa in the period under question. The Aga Khan's support for Muslim welfare in East Africa was a clear sign of this trend in the community.

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Our central theme in this chapter so far has been the change and modifications in the social identity of the Ismailis in the East African milieu. As we have seen, the factors responsible for such changes can be broadly divided into two categories: (a) pressures from the external environment, and (b) internal features making for change. In certain spheres, as we have noted, the onset of change and modification has been the direct result of changes or important events essentially external to the community, but having bearings on its internal organization. From another point of view, some of these changes in the internal organization of the Ismailis have been the logical sequel to an inner momentum contained in various features, of which the belief-system is the chief one. We now come to one of the most profound revolutions that the history of East Africa ever witnessed, the rise of African nationalism, the withdrawal of British rule and the establishment of independent African government. Undesisting in its paramount aim to regain sovereignty over the land, and undaunted by the many obstacles and difficulties it had to confront, the tide of African nationalism swept over the East African territories with dramatic swiftness in the post-war era. Its impact on the whole structure of the social, economic, and political life of the countries was equally cataclysmic. While seeking a total change in the government of the country,

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it compelled an equally violent and dramatic change in those societies which had prospered in sheltered enclaves of their own. And the degree of change which it demanded from them hardly fell short of a total overhaul in some important fields of their social and economic organization. In this final section of this chapter, we shall examine at some length the Ismailis' response to this momentous change in the countries in which they had established themselves so securely, and the repercussions of this event on their social identity.

In order to understand the reaction of the Ismailis to the change of rule, with all its far-reaching consequences on their communal life and organization, it is necessary to trace their attitude towards the countries in which they had settled, since the time they established themselves there as a well-organized and prospering community. It is interesting to note that though the conditions affecting migration and settlement had to a significant degree been the same in the case of all the Indian communities, and though all these communities shared certain common ways of life, the attitude of the Ismailis to their new home was remarkably different. The first point to note in this connection is that the Ismailis, in common with other Muslims, did not have the same link with India that the Hindu communities had due

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to the prevalence of the caste-system. Owing to the fact that the various Hindu classes in India were ranked as castes or jati in a total hierarchical system, their connections with India were deeper and more insuperable than those of the Muslim groups who were not so entrenched in the caste-order. As Morris observes, the scrupulousness with which the Hindu communities in East Africa arranged correct endogamous marriages was aimed at securing acceptance at home when they returned there.[106] On the other hand, the Muslim migrants came to East Africa with a view to permanent settlement.[107] To take another instance, the Goans, a small but important community, who were, notably in their westernized life-style and in their communal schools and clubs, strikingly similar to the Ismailis, nevertheless maintained strong and real links with Goa. J.E. Goldthorpe observed that most of the Goans in East Africa had been born in Goa, and retained Portuguese nationalities. Similarly, they also conformed to caste-regulations, retained Portuguese names, and their men returned home in order to get married.[108] Conversely, the Ismailis' policy of discarding Indian cultural traits impelled them to seek a new identity. This readjustment in their social identity could be made only in reference to their

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new home. Indeed, most of the Muslim communities had far weaker links with India than the Hindus, Goans, or other non-Muslim Indians. None of them, however, had as much at stake in the new country as the Ismailis, who had built massive institutions to strengthen their foothold. Again, none of these other communities pursued their aims in so deliberate and systematic a manner as did the Ismailis, chiefly because of the leadership of the Aga Khan, who geared the programmes of the community to definite ends. Under the mantle of security accorded to them by the Aga Khan, the Ismailis looked upon their settlement in East Africa not as a temporary sojourn but as a new start. The Aga Khan's policy was to exhort his followers in the various countries in which they had settled (and not merely in East Africa) to identify themselves more authentically with their adopted home. Thus, as early as 1914, he urged the jamāts in Rangoon to consider Burma as their home. In 1934, he impressed upon them the necessity of learning the Burmese language in order to identify themselves more deeply with the rest of the nation. Similarly, in 1939, he advised them to establish closer contacts with the local Burmese population. During his visit to India the following year, he urged the representatives of his jamāts in Burma to

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to adopt the local Burmese dress so as not to appear different from the indigenous people. He also reiterated several times the importance of learning the Burmese language and of mingling freely with the indigenous people, thus giving concrete proof of their policy to adopt Burma as their real home rather than a place to eke out their living on a temporary basis. In 1951, he once again urged them to discard their mother language, Gujerati, and to adopt Burmese and English in its place. Similarly, in India he insisted that his followers give more importance to local Indian languages, and to include in their curricula such subjects as the authorities in India would welcome in view of their development policies. On an exactly similar note, in the Malagasy Republic (previously known as Madagascar) he urged his followers in 1946 to adopt French and Malagase, since these were going to be the chief languages of the country. Citing the example of Burma where he said his farmāns to his followers to integrate themselves with the indigenous population had helped them to tide over the crisis created by the Japanese invasion, he asked the jamāts in Malagasy to identify themselves in like manner with the sentiments of the local population.

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These examples serve to illustrate the general policy of the Aga Khan in respect of his followers settled in different countries where signs of incipient nationalism had begun to be manifest. The Aga Khan's own experience in British-Indian politics had equipped him with a special alertness and instinctive grasp of the growing tide of nationalism in African and Asian countries.

In East Africa, the Aga Khan's advice to his followers in this respect was on exactly parallel lines. As early as 1925, he had been stressing the need on the part of his followers to learn English as well as the African language which was locally prevalent. In the same year, at Zanzibar, he made the following farmān: "You must cherish Africa as your true home, with love and whole-heartedness ..... It is my wish that you should call yourselves Kenyans, Tanganyikans, Zanzibaris, etc., as the case may be. You must consider these places as your home. If you do not accept this land as your home with honesty, love, and without hesitation, you are not going to benefit. For a nation rewards only those who embrace it as their real home."[109] Similarly in 1926 in a farmān at Nairobi, he urged his followers to give up any expectations of returning to India. Instead, they were advised to consolidate their interests in the East African countries. Accordingly, he strongly disapproved

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of any individuals who returned to India after having secured a profit in East Africa. In 1937 he reiterated the same principle:

"Your position is quite different from that of other Asians. You have made this country your home. I think many a family amongst you have settled in this part for the last 150 years. Since I first visited East Africa in 1899, I don't think any Ismaili has returned to India. You are not birds of passage. Your roots are very deep. Your future is tied with Kenya, Tanganyika, Zanzibar and Uganda. Therefore, I am appealing to you to be true, loyal subjects of these countries which you have made your home."[110]

Again, in 1948, he drew the attention of his followers to the happy absence of lawlessness and violence in the East African territories, and to the fact that "this land has brought you peace and prosperity. You have a duty to be extremely loyal to this country. You must do whatever you can for the prosperity of this country without looking elsewhere."[111] He also urged his followers to maintain good relations with their African employees and customers, and to take on Africans as partners in large companies.

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Once again, he stressed the necessity of learning local languages. Indeed, over the course of the years, the Imam's policy was directed towards eliminating Hindu cultural traits from the community. In 1952, at a conference held at Evian (generally considered by the Ismailis as a watershed in the history of the community in East Africa), it was resolved that Gujerati be removed from the curriculum of the Ismaili schools and English adopted as the main language. As the Aga Khan says in his memoirs, "So far as their (i.e. the Ismailis') way of life is concerned, I have tried to vary the advice which I have given to my followers in accordance with the country or state in which they live. Thus in the British colony of East Africa, I strongly urge them to make English their first language, to found their domestic lives along English lines and in general to adopt British and European customs ..... I am convinced that living as they must in a multi-racial society, the kind of social life, its organization which gives them the greatest opportunities to develop their personalities and is most practically useful is the one which they ought to follow."[112]

After the succession of the present Aga Khan to the Imāmat in 1957, the Ismaili community was more firmly geared towards a position where their identity could be

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conceived more in terms of integral membership of the national population of the three territories. The task of altering the image that the Ismailis had established of themselves as an exclusive and self-contained community and adapting it to the demands of African nationalism, figured centrally in the new Imam's policies. The position of Asian communities in East Africa had become precarious in the tumultous years preceding independence. Although the Indians had militated vigorously against the segregationist policies of the British government from the 1920's onwards, there had been a relative quiescence in the years preceding independence. More than that, the fact that the Asians had obtained a successful hold over commerce, which formed an essential part of the economy of the respective countries, was a source of resentment on the part of the Africans. In the aspiring African's attempt to progress upwards in the economic ladder, the Asian, particularly the retail merchant, invariably became an obstacle on the rung immediately above that on which the African found himself. The various educational and welfare institutions that the Asians had established in the country were for the most part confined to members of their own communities. Socially, they had established themselves as groups which were highly insulated from the

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African population. George Delf, writing in 1962, made the apt observation that "the very cohesion and sectarian unity which has been the economic strength of the Asians in East Africa is now of very dubious value."[113] No doubt, the situation in the four countries was different in several important respects. In Tanganyika, the relatively peaceful history of the country and the vivid sense of nationalism created by Julius Nyerere's leadership, as well as the solidarity which resulted from the successful establishment of a one-party state, helped to ease racial tension. In Zanzibar, on the other hand, the alliance of the affluent Asians with the Arab regime was responsible for growing signs of African resentment. In Uganda, the absence of a European settler population as militant as that in Kenya, and the heritage of a fairer representation of the minorities, led to a relatively calmer situation in comparison to Kenya. Still, African resentment came to a dangerous height in 1959 when goods sold by non-Africans were boycotted. It was in Kenya, however, that politics were most turbulent. For the persistent propaganda on the part of European settlers - a propaganda which more than once acutely embarassed the British government - had left a legacy of bitter racial hatred. Again, since the Asians had been forced by law to confine themselves to commercial occupations, they were a greater threat to the aspirations

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of the Africans. It was against this background of transistional uncertainties that the Aga Khan IV found himself in a position where he was expected to steer his community into calmer waters.

During his rapid tour of the East African countries in 1957, when he was officially installed as the Imam, the Aga Khan urged his followers to strive actively towards a multi-racial understanding in their respective countries. During his ensuing visits, he took a number of important and concrete steps to give convincing evidence of the policy of the community towards greater adaptation to the political changes. At the same time, he devoted himself to the task of inculcating a patriotic spirit into his East African followers. To a large extent, this amounted to a process of re-education, for although the rudiments of adaptation, as we have seen, were inherent in the ideology of the Ismailis, the need for such adaptation had to be brought up into the forefront of the community's awareness and thus given a new emphasis.

There were four important fields in which the Aga Khan thought the organization and values of his community needed to be re-orientated. Thus, the specific policies that he advocated with a view to helping his followers to understand the aspirations of African nationalism, can be broadly divided into four categories, viz. the economic,

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the political, the social, and the educational spheres. It is obvious that what was needed was scarcely short of a profound and radical re-adjustment. Hitherto the Ismailis had firmly maintained their identity as a distinct community. The other Indian communities had also organized themselves as exclusive groups, and thus the picture of East African society in the pre-independence era was one of a Plural Society, with a certain amount of stratification in which the various races were ranked as broad classes. The Aga Khan was quick to realize the explosive nature of the situation, and made a very apt and significant admission when he stated that "the days of exclusive community development, in our opinion, are over."[114] One of the fields in which he immediately sought to make adjustments in anticipation of the Africans' natural aspirations to control their own economy, was in the commercial enterprises of his followers. He urges those Ismailis who ran shops on a small scale or retail basis, to make way for the Africans by either joining larger concerns or preferably diverting their resources to the process of industrialization in the various countries. Since it was realized the governments would be too tied down with other priorities to devote their attention entirely to the much-

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needed task of industrialization in the early stages, the Ismailis realized that this was one field where they, as Asians, could make an original and substantial contribution. In addition, he also advocated that leading merchants and industrialists in the community should make it a point to train suitable African apprentices for managerial posts, and perhaps, even to take them on as partners. He also personally launched the East African Newspapers Ltd., which was intended to introduce a new slant and spirit of commitment in the country's press. In some ways, the most important and certainly the most conspicuous step in this process of economic readjustment was the founding of the Industrial Promotion Services, to which we have referred earlier. It was designed to speed up industrialization in the country, and was warmly welcomed by African leaders.

In the political sphere, the Aga Khan strongly urged his followers to become citizens of each of the various East African countries in which they were residing. The necessity for adopting local citizenship formed the most prominent theme of his farmāns to the community during his visits to East Africa in the period following independence. In order to speed up the process, the various councils in the community established special

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"citizenship committees" which had the responsibility of briefing the Ismailis in local areas about the technicalities of the process, and of helping them in their applications. As a result, in the interim period after independence, when the Asians were given a choice of either continuing to retain British citizenship, or renouncing it in favour of the new nationality, most Ismailis opted for the latter course and became citizens of the respective countries in which they lived. Apart from this, the role of the Ismailis as a community in the political events of the day was insignificant. No doubt, individual Ismaili leaders participated in the national politics, just as leaders from other Asian communities did, but they were not allowed to represent the community as a whole.

More attention was paid to the social sphere of the community's activities. Greater co-operation with the Africans in every-day life was repeatedly urged by the Aga Khan. As we have seen, the East African Muslim Welfare Society had been founded mainly with the African Muslims in mind. One of the motives behind its establishment had been to secure a sound basis of interaction with the African Muslims. The Platinum Jubilee Hospital at Nairobi admitted patients of all races since the time it was founded, and Ismaili hospitals

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in other towns were also thrown open to people of all races. Through these institutions, and also through women's societies in the community, who were urged to work in more active collaboration with African women's organizations, the Ismailis sought to establish a specific channel of communication on the social plane.

Finally, an important drive towards readjustment was to be found in the sphere of education. To begin with, the Imam repeatedly and earnestly emphasized the value of education to his own community. This was a marked change since the 40's when it had been felt that the community's stronghold over an important section of the economy ought to be retained at all costs. Though education had begun to receive a growing emphasis, it was still sub-ordinate to commercial enterprise. Now the priorities were radically reversed and the Ismailis were advised to impart the highest professional and university education to their children at all costs. It was felt that one of the most important ways in which the community cound contribute to national development and at the same time strengthen its own position in East Africa was by providing an increasing number of well-trained young people to man the professions and the Civil Service. Apart from this, the Aga Khan saw in his schools the most important means whereby the process of racial integration could be

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achieved. In addition, he had as Tom Mboya notes, several times donated substantial sums of money to help finance the so-called "air-lift" programme of sending African students to America, which was sponsored by the African American Students Foundation and which had come into existence largely through Mboya's efforts.[115] Furthermore in the Aga Khan's view, which he stated in his speeches on several occasions, the beginnings of a multi-racial society could be established more effectively and with a greater naturalness in schools than anywhere else.[116] The Ismaili schools were among the first to open their doors to pupils of all races.[117] Maintaining a high standard of secular education, and aiming at producing students competent enough to pursue university education in East Africa or elsewhere, these schools have been the mainstay of the community's drive towards a multi-racial consciousness. On the whole, therefore, the Ismailis have been remarkably quick at adapting themselves to the fundamentally altered political, social and economic conditions in recent years. However, whether integration has made any headway at grass-root level, i.e. in the every-day lives of individual Ismailis, is another question altogether. It is a question, moreover, that cannot be settled except through field-study, and as such no judgement can be made here on this point.

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Table 1

Religious affiliations of East African Indians in 1948

(source: Non-Native Censuses, 1948)

Country	Total Indian Population	Islam (so stated)	Sunni	Ismaili	Ithana-'asheri	Bohra	Others
Uganda	33,767	470	2,573	6,448	1,211	347	23
Kenya	90,528	6,187	891	9,171	1,250	1,934	130
Tanganyika	56,499	3,536	3,572	16,663	4,331	2,453	127
Zanzibar	13,007						
Pemba	2,104						
Total	195,905	10,193	7,063	32,282	6,682	4,743	280

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Table II

Summary chart of the institutions sponsored by the East African Muslim Welfare Society from June 1945 to June 1954

(reproduced from the Souvenir of the E.A.W.S., p.19)

Country	Schools	Mosques	Teacher Training Colleges	Boardings	Technical Schools	Water Reservoirs	Camps for the destitute
Kenya	21	16	-	-	-	1	-
Uganda	48	30	1	1	3	-	-
Tanganyika	29	38	-	-	-	-	1
Zanzibar and Pemba Island	1	9	-	-	-	-	-

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Chapter V

The Religious System of the Ismailis in East Africa

A matter of the utmost importance that should be borne in mind in any study of the Ismailis is that they are essentially a religious community. The doctrinal system of the Ismailis has a history stretching back over a long time, dating from the period when they emerged as a distinct off-shoot of the Shīʿa sect in Islam. In East Africa, an elaborate and firmly entrenched doctrinal system, whose rudiments were derived from this long history, provided the central rallying-force and a vital sense of identity for the community. Around these central principles was erected a complex and highly differentiated structure of values which were retained, adapted or modified in response to the repercussions of external events or internal organizational developments in the social, economic, and political spheres. In the midst of such developments, the element of historicity, and hence the sense of continuity in the doctrinal system provided an essential source of ideological sustenance. At the same time, however, it is important to realize that besides serving as a source of a vital sense of

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continuity in an era of unprecedented feverish social change, the religious beliefs of the Ismailis frequently acted as a spur to this very process of change. In its turn, the social change that has been such a vivid and distinctive feature of the Ismaili society since the early years of this century, necessitated a certain modification in specific areas of their religious and value systems, if friction or incompatibility between these two major departments of the society's organization was to be avoided. Here one may recall a basic principle of analysis that has been previously stressed in this study - namely, the dialectical nature of the interaction of religious and social factors. This in fact is a principle that has on occasions been recognized by those sociologists or anthropologists who have concerned themselves with the functions of religious beliefs in various societies, especially in a diachronic as opposed to a synchronic context.[1] What one cannot fail to notice in societies where religion is an integral feature is that not only do religious beliefs serve definite functions in maintaining the solidarity of the society as a whole, but they also tend, in varying degrees, to be compatible with other

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sub-systems of the society. This tendency for different aspects of a social system to be in harmony with one another is what T.F. Hoult has called "Socio-Cultural Compatibility".[2] No doubt, in employing such a concept a certain amount of caution is necessary, for in most cases a society in which religion and other sub-systems are perfectly "compatible" with one another remains an "ideal type". In the actual state of affairs, one can in not a few societies suspect the existence of disparity between the religious beliefs and the rest of the constituent-elements in the structure of the societies concerned. Indeed, in some cases, when social change has affected the organization and values of a society to a significant extent, religious beliefs and rites may cause stresses and strains within the system by failing to fit into the total structure of the society as a whole. Nevertheless, it is <u>generally</u> true to assert that religion has a definite function in social systems, and, furthermore, that there is an over-all tendency in most cases for the nature of religious beliefs to show some degree of compatibility or assonance with important structural and organizational features of the same society.

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In the previous chapter, we discussed at some length the organizational changes that formed an important feature of the history of the Ismaili community in East Africa, particularly during the phase of its search for a new social identity. We now turn our attention to different level of social process altogether - namely, the pattern of beliefs and values in the community. Needless to say, the two facets of the community's over-all system were linked together in a complex manner. In some instances, the relationship consisted of straightforward and parallel developments. In other areas of the community's social organization, the connection was more subtle or involved and demands a more complex interpretation. On the whole, however, the fact remains that one can detect a certain reciprocity in the two spheres of development. It is due to this reason that we have divided the dynamics of continuity and change in the history of the community in East Africa, into these two broad categories of social organization on one hand, and beliefs and values on the other. Such a classification is highly rewarding in that it enables one to separate two major components of the social system which behave and are organized on different lines. At the same time, this division contributes

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to a specific mode of analysis which makes the over-all process of development more intelligible by enabling one to break it down into its constituent-elements and to trace the connection between them. This mode of analysis has an especial merit and utility in as much as the subject of this study involves a detailed consideration of a highly dynamic phase in the history of the Ismailis. Hence the primary theme of this chapter as well as the next will consist of the relationship between these two aspects of the social life of the Ismailis in East Africa. This point will be assumed as the gist of the interpretative framework of the developments discussed below, and, for this reason, need not receive any further elaboration or repetition.

In considering the developments and conflicts that preceded the court-suits in Bombay, we had noted the ambiguities inherent in the symbotic nature of Indian Ismailism. In a nutshell, Ismaili beliefs and practices at this stage comprised Hindu ideas integrated with Islamic tenets (the latter appearing in the form in which they had been expounded in Nizārī Ismaili theology), as well as a pronounced element of mystical thought. Owing to reasons which are not quite clear, in the later half of the nineteenth century,

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individual Ismaili writers seem to have been increasingly pre-occupied with a search for their historical origins and for a clearer delimitation of the dogmatic principles on which their religious practices were based. It is impossible to say whether this self-searching was a reflection of a more wide-spread trend in a particular section of the community. In any case, as we have seen, the eventual outcome of these developments was the gradual growth of a more vivid sense of the separate and distinctive identity of the community. That this process was not unattended by severe strain is a fact which we have already noted. For at certain stages it would have appeared that the religious beliefs of the community were in the danger of swerving either towards a more Sunnite emphasis, or (and this at an even more crucial stage in their history) towards an Ithna'asheri form. The fact that the community had to pass through these stages suggests that its religious principles had not yet come to be sufficiently crystallized on the formal or organizational level. On the other hand, the fact that in spite of this potentially disruptive threat the Ismailis finally emerged with a renewed and even more secure sense of their distinctive identity, owes

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itself to certain essential features of the doctrinal system which set them apart from other religious groups even before these doctrines had been embodied in an elaborately organized community.

The most important feature of the doctrinal system of the Ismailis, of course, is the Imāmat. It is as much a nucleus of their own religious and social existence as it is a conspicuous feature setting them apart in the eyes of observers. The deep feelings of reverence that the Ismailis cherished for their Imām-e-Zamān, i.e. the Imam for the time-being, was a constant feature of Ismailism through the ages. One of the most interesting ways in which this important institution, which was a pivot of their religious system, had practical consequences for the social organization of the Ismailis in East Africa, lay in what can be called its "catalytic" as well as the "redressive" functions in relation to change. In other words, while the Imam encouraged and supervised, and in some instances initiated the process of change, he also provided a background of continuity against which the change could take place without toppling over into mere drift or indirection. Simultaneously, his function was

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also to redress imbalances or incompatibilities caused by too extensive or too drastic processes of change. For the purpose of this chapter, however, the most noteworthy consequence of the Imāmat on the social organization of the Ismailis is to be found in the remarkable solidarity and centralization in the community. Over the period we have been discussing, the Imam was in more than one sense the pivot around which the whole society revolved, and thus all the various departments of the community's organization, and all the different fields of its activities converged onto him. When the Ismaili settlers in East Africa were spreading over a wide network of towns as well as smaller centres in the interior of the three countries, the presence of a living Imam, whom they obeyed out of deep religious devotion, and who exercised powerful and effective authority over all the various departments of communal life, united them into a single strong body. This indeed had far-reaching consequences on their social organization. Most of the specific organizational developments that have been discussed in the last chapter were rendered possible only due to the existence of the living Imam in the person of the Aga Khan. Since we shall be resuming the discussion of the Imāmat and its place in

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the religious and social system of the Ismailis in a more detailed form in a later chapter of this thesis, we shall postpone further elaboration of these points for the time being. Nevertheless, it is necessary to bear in mind, through the course of this chapter, that one can by no means over-emphasize the fact that the very existence of the Ismailis today is tied up with the presence of the living Imam, and that all the developments that we have discussed in the last two chapters revolve round his person.

Apart from the Imāmat, there were several outstanding features of the religious system of the Ismailis which set them apart from other religious groups in a significant manner. These features were to be found mostly in the domain of the rites and practices of the community. The most important of these was the duā or prayer, which, according to some traditions, had been originally given to the Khojā converts in India by Pīr Sadardīn. According to yet another tradition, it was Saiyad Dādū who had composed the duā which was in existence among the Khojas till recent times. Over the course of the years, however, the duā underwent significant changes, as we shall see further below. Yet another feature which

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distinguished the Khojās from the followers of other faiths was the vast body of gīnān literature, which we have already discussed in detail.[4] These two essential elements in the religious system of the Khojā Ismailis were most characteristic and prominent hall-marks of Indian Ismailism in the form in which it was practised. Moreover, they have remained as an essential component of the Ismaili faith in East Africa up to date. During the court-suit of 1905, several witnesses affirmed that they had been hearing the duā and the gīnāns recited in the jamātkhānās since the time they could recall.[5] This practice was also stated to have been as prevalent among the Ismailis in the time of the Aga Khan I as it was in later years. By this time, in fact, copies of the duā and the gīnāns had already begun to be sold and distributed within the community. In later years, both the duā and the gīnāns were printed in the form of books, as was shown by the evidence of several witnesses who had been responsible for printing and publishing such books. These printed copies of the duā and the gīnāns were presented as exhibits in the court during the course of the proceedings. In East Africa the Ismaili migrants brought these two characteristic features of their religious system along with them. As far as the

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self-image of the community was concerned, these practices served the function of re-inforcing the distinct identity of the people. In the ultimate analysis, therefore, the roots of this distinct identity were to be found in the religious system of the community. The eventual emergence of the Ismailis as a people who were clearly and most strikingly demarcated from other communities in East Africa, was a development whose rudiments, in the first instance, were to be found in the sphere of their religious practices. It may be true, as Morris observed, that the differences between the different communities became clear-cut only after sufficiently large numbers of their members had settled in the country.[7] This may also have been true of the Ismailis as far as the earliest phase of their settlement is concerned. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the roots of such a distinctive development in their case are to be found, in the first instance, in their religious system. To summarize the discussion thus far, it can be said that besides the fundamental place of the Imāmat in the doctrinal system of the Ismailis, the existence of the duā and the gīnāns among them formed the most concrete and observable proof of their distinctive identity.

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The subsequent history of the community saw the evolution of a separate religious identity whose basis lay in the established beliefs and rites which we have discussed above. This process was equally noticeable in East Africa. The vital centre of this development was the jamātkhānā. In fact, as the Ismailis busied themselves with the task of organizing a self-contained community in which economic and social prosperity figured as prominently as their religious principles, the jamātkhānā assumed increasing importance. No account of the religious and social life of contemporary Khojā Ismailis would be complete, therefore, without due consideration of this most fundamental and central feature of their organization.

In the chapter on the gīnāns, we noted that Pīr Sadardīn is said to have established the first jamātkhānā with a Mukhī or presiding officier in Sindh.[8] We have also seen that the followers of the new faith were exhorted to attend the jamātkhānā regularly for congregational prayer. In addition to this, the jamātkhānā was given an emphatic mystical significance, for the Divine Light was held to be present in it.[9] Thus it is probable that an elementary form of congregational organization had

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already been established by the time of the Pīrs. In his judgement of the Khojā Case, Justice Arnold noted the existence of jamātkhānās where the Ismailis met regularly twice a day (i.e. at dawn and dusk) to say their prayers and to perform their religious rites.[10] These jamātkhānās were presided over by the Mukhī and the Kāmaria. The former term can be roughly translated as "chief officer". The latter has been said to be the equivalent of "treasurer". The jamātkhānā was thus the central place where the Khoja Ismailis met as a congregation, and where their sense of belonging to a common religious tradition was accordingly re-inforced. At the same time, being the place where they saw each other regularly, it also became the potential centre of their social organization. Indeed in an elementary form, religion and society had already become inter-mingled through the jamātkhānā. One can thus realize that it was by no means an insignificant fact that in 1848, the dissenting party who had fallen out with the main body of the Khojās established themselves in a separate jamātkhānā.[11] For the building had come to stand for the very existence of the Khojā Ismailis as much in the religious as in the social sense.

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During his first visit to East Africa in 1899, the Aga Khan III stressed the importance of the jamātkhānā as a means of re-inforcing the religious consciousness of the individual followers of the faith. Congregational prayer was given a very high degree of importance, and the Ismailis were asked to attend the jamātkhānā regularly for prayers, except in cases of illness or other important exigencies. Similarly, in 1905, at Nairobi, the Imam reminded his followers that in view of the fact that they had left their parent-community in India to establish for themselves a new home, the only way of preserving awareness of their religious principles was through regular prayer in the jamātkhānā. Over the course of years, as the Ismailis came to incorporate the ideal of maximum social progress as an important component of their value-system, and as they consequently developed a highly efficient net-work of schools, hospitals and welfare institutions, the jamātkhānā became an increasingly important centre. From being the nucleus of their religious and social life - which it had already been since the earliest times - it now evolved into a centre onto which their multifarious institutions and activities converged. It was the jamātkhānā which to a large extent rendered possible the centralization necessary for such activities;

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and it was in the jamātkhānā that important information was disseminated. Syed Mujtaba Ali notes that the jamātkhānās "remind us of the Fāṭimid House of Wisdom in which their Majlises were held and although we do not hear of any such institutions among the Assassins of Alamūt we shall not be very wrong to consider the Jamā'at Khānas made in imitation of those. The Fāṭimid House of Wisdom existed side by side with the orthodox Mosques and they as well as the Jamā'at Khānas remind us of the earliest Mosques founded by the Prophet in Medina which were used not only for prayers but meetings, transaction with the non-Muslims, receiving ambassadors, treatment of believers wounded in battle, etc."[12] What is important to note in this context is that for the Khojā Ismailis, such a development sprang from their attempt to adapt themselves to the new conditions in their respective countries, and to adopt the new outlook on life, of which the Imam was an ardent exponent. The jamātkhānā was now no more solely a place to pray in. The activities which took place in it were no more confined to the recitation of the duā and the gīnāns. The farmāns and messages of the Aga Khan were also proclaimed in the jamātkhānās. Guidance and advice from the Imam,

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often sent in the form of detailed telegrams, concerning such diverse issues as education, health, care of children, the importance of loyalty to the country of adoption, the need for acquiring citizenship of the East African countries in the post-independence phase, etc., was regularly read out in the jamātkhānās. In addition, leading members of the community frequently made speeches on topical issues and development projects. In this way the jamātkhānā, besides its importance as a place of worship, became a centre where information concerning Ismaili activities could be disseminated, where new ideas and adjustments could be instilled into the members of the community, and where, above all, the Ismailis settled in one locality could remain up-to-date with the activities of fellow-believers in other areas. It was also the venue through which they could keep in touch with the Imam's guidance and advice for topical problems and matters of every-day life, through his farmāns and messages. Finally, when the Imam personally visited his followers, he always gave audience to them and spoke to them in the jamātkhānās. In considering the process of change affecting the values and moves

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of the Ismailis in East Africa, as the community evolved towards a set-up that incorporated the ideals of secular progress, it cannot be over-emphasized that this process took place only through the vital and multi-purposive role of the jamātkhānā in the religious and social life of the Ismailis.

One of the essential characteristics of the progressive change in Khojā Ismaili doctrine since the time of its original propagation has been the steady drift from Hinduistic elements. This trend was particularly marked during the Imāmat of the Aga Khan III, when the elimination of Indian cultural traits was a definite and deliberate aim of the Imam's policies. For, as the evidence of a number of Khojās during the proceedings of the court-suit in 1905 clearly shows, the community had still retained important Hindu relics in their culture.[13] It was under the leadership of the Aga Khan III that these cultural traits were progressively discarded, and alternative features of the doctrine and of the value-system of the Ismailis were brought to the fore-front with a new emphasis. On the whole, one would not be wrong in asserting that the over-all trend in Ismaili society consisted of a progressive march away

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from the Hindu component of Khojā tradition, and that this trend has been in existence, even if only in a latent and not fully recognized form, since an early stage in the history of the faith. The belief in the Imāmat certainly contributed to this trend, for, as we have noted earlier, in the case of the Imāmshāhis, who were an off-shoot of the main body of Satpanth tradition, and who thus shared essentially common characteristics with the Khojās except for the belief in the Ismaili Imāmat, the general tendency with the passage of time consisted of what nearly amounted to a progressive absorption in Hinduism.[14]

While the movement away from Hindu beliefs and of social and cultural traits derived from the Hindu ethnic background was unmistakably there, the direction towards which the religious thought in the community was unfolding, had to be carefully kept in view. For the path was beset by not a few uncertainties or perils. In other words, if the central and historical principles of Ismailism were now to be arficulated in a new form, the latter had to be carefully defined. Moreover, parallel to the search in the community for a new and distinctive social identity was an underlying awareness that the

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religious identity of the people had to be as distinctly and as unequivocally affirmed. Hence, whenever the singularity of the doctrinal principles of Ismailism was liable to be obscured by either the intrusion of non-Ismaili practices or the undesirable predominance of the Hindu strand in the doctrine, or through the potential confusion inherent in the similarity of specific elements in the religious thought and practice of the community with their counterparts in other religious systems, the imbalance had to be redressed. Thus, on the ideational plane, one can discern here a movement which in a general sense was parallel to that which one finds on the social plane. For here again a distinctive identity had to be nurtured. And here again the line between alliance and amalgamation, and between indifferent neutrality and active hostility had to be discovered and vigilantly preserved.

As we have seen in the last chapter, the first major internal conflict in which the Ismaili community was involved brought in its wake the crucial question as to whether the Ismailis were Sunnīs. The second important manifestation of this conflict, and one which markedly affected the community in East Africa, involved hostility between the Ismailis and the Ithnaʿasheris.

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The idealogies of both the faiths figured prominently in a series of show-downs illustrating strong antagonism between the two communities. Thus, while the trend in the Ismaili community was in the direction of a more delineated form of Ismailism which took account of basic Islamic principles, it was felt that care ought to be taken to ensure that the new form in which its beliefs were to be embodied, was distinctive enough not to be confused with either the Sunnī or the Ithna'asheri interpretation of Islam. As far as the Sunnīs were concerned, the belief in the Imāmat was characteristic enough for the Ismailis to be identified as Shī'as. In regard to the Ithna'asheris, however, who, as a community, were vehemently hostile to the Ismailis in East Africa, the necessity for differentiation was more pressing. Moreover, though the Khojā Case of 1866 had centered round the question as to whether the Ismailis were Sunnīs, the Sunnī community itself, both in India as well as East Africa, had never been in direct opposition to the Ismailis. The issue, therefore, was mainly between the Ismailis and the Ithna'asheries. In the course of this conflict, the differentiating function of the Imāmat was most vividly brought out. On one hand, the

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interpretation of the Imāmat was formulated in definitely Islamic terms. For the old form in which the Ismaili belief in Imāmat had originally been expounded in India, where the Pīrs had shrewdly made use of the existing doctrine of divine incarnations as a basis for the new faith, was de-emphasized. On the other hand, it was asserted over and over again that the essence of Ismailism consisted in the acknowledgement of a living Imam and not a hidden one. The stress on a living and ever-present Imam and the opposition to the concept of the concealed Imam is a feature by no means confined to contemporary Ismailism. For it was equally characteristic of Fāṭimid as well as Nizārī Ismailism. But in the specific circumstances in East Africa, where there was a marked conflict with the Ithnaʿasheris, with important repercussions on the social relationships between the members of the two communities, this doctrine received a special importance. It is also interesting to note that in the Ismaili literature of this time, the doctrinal principles of the community were expounded mainly on the basis of the Qurʿān.

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Besides the principle of the continued presence of a living Imam for the community, one finds a number of other themes regarding the doctrine of the Imāmat in the literature of the time. Thus the Ithnaʿasheris' criticism of Ismaili ideas concerning the Imāmat centered largely round the question as to how well-versed the Imam was in Fiqh and to what extent he was a Hāfiz of the Qurʿān. The Ismailis on the other hand interpreted the Imāmat on Sufistic lines. Accordingly, the Imam was held to possess the knowledge of the "spirit" or "essence" of the Qurʿān which was considered more important than its letter (in ancient Ismailism the term used for this idea had been ta'wīl, which, however, has slightly different connotations). The "inner" knowledge was in fact considered superior to literal knowledge of the scriptures.[15] Another point that was emphasized strongly was the belief that the Imam's presence was required primarily with a view to guidance regarding adaptation of traditional principles to changing times.[16] It was also his task to point out the ideal way in which religious beliefs could be harmonized with the social and cultural characteristics of any specific period. Moreover, the Ismaili belief in the Imāmat had been

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increasingly "rationalized," so that ideas regarding his miraculous powers, for instance, were frowned on both in the Imam's own teachings and in the official literature of the community. Such an interpretation also clashed with the interpretation of the Imāmat that prevailed among the Khojā Ithna'asheris of the period. Thus a polemical text published in India by an Ismaili writer reproduces (rather derisively) the question addressed to the Ismailis by an Ithna'asheri as to whether the Ismaili Imam possessed any signs of miraculous powers, such as, for instance, the capacity to resurrect a corpse![17] This illustrates most clearly the difference in the criteria by which the opposing parties believed the Imāmat was to be judged.

In this way, the Ismailis succeeded to a remarkable degree in avoiding the pitfalls that lay in the possibility of their being confused with other groups who were closely related to them on the social and informal level. They were thus able to prevent their own beliefs from being diluted or compromised to any significant extent. Since the time of the Khojā Case, and more specifically, during the Imāmat of the Aga Khan III, individual members of the community

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seem to have been interested in probing into the historical background of the doctrine they found prevailing in the community. The lay followers of the faith, indeed, had meagre knowledge of the history of Ismailism in the period preceding the conversion in India. For instance, an Ismaili author, writing in 1892, notes that one of the Khojās, to whom he happened to mention the fortress of Alamūt was totally ignorant of its whereabouts, and in fact thought it was an other-worldly kingdom.[18] By the period of the Imāmat of the Aga Khan III, this state of affairs had been largely ameliorated. For Ismaili publications during this period not only displayed a knowledge of the pre-Indian phase of Ismailism on the part of several members of the community, but also reflected a noteworthy grasp of the Qur'ān. Associated with this process was a general change in the form in which the essential doctrines of Ismailism had been presented in India. In the court-suit of 1905, for example, two of the witnesses affirmed most categorically that they no more gave serious attention to the concept of the avtārs preceding the Islamic revelation and the Imāmat of 'Alī. For, as they asserted, it was an important principle of their faith that the memory of the earlier

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manifestations or signs of God ought to be supplanted by allegiance to the latest form of God's revelation.[19] This trend of thought was entirely in accordance with the policy of the Imam. The latter also tried to impress upon his followers that they ought to relate their doctrines more clearly to the principles embodied in the Qurʿān. On the other hand, in keeping with the essential characteristic of Ismailism, he insisted that a true understanding of the spirit of the Qurʿān was more desirable than the mere recitation of it without understanding of its contents. As a matter of fact, the mystical component of Ismailism was supremely important, and served the function, among other things of enabling it to be distinguished from other groups on a fundamental level. The Qurʿān according to the teachings of the Imam, was to be interpreted in essentially the same light in which the Mathnawi of Jalāl-ad-dīn Rūmī was understood. Thus the superiority of the bāṭin over the ẓāhir was continuously stressed. We shall return to a fuller discussion of the mysticism in contemporary Ismailism, at a later stage. For the moment, the central focus of our attention is the process of change in certain spheres of the religious practices of the community, and their co-relation with similar or equivalent developments in the social milieu.

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One of the most significant changes in the religious rites of the Ismailis over this time seems to have been the elimination of the practice of commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn in the month of Muḥarram. As was shown in the court-suits of 1866 and 1905, the Ismailis commemorated the martyrdom of Imam Husayn through the bayān (or Kisā), or recitation of the tragedy, in the month of Muḥarram. It should be noted that this was wholly consistent with the doctrinal beliefs of the Ismailis, since they are, to begin with, Shiʿites. Moreover, while the Ismailis in Bombay, for instance, attended the narration of the bayān, they nevertheless refrained from attending the recitation of the rozākhāni, which includes the mention of the twelve Imams of the Ithnaʿasheris. In spite of this, however, the opposing party in the suit against the Aga Khan in 1905 asserted that this practice served to vindicate the claim that the Ismailis were in reality Ithnaʿasheris. The abolition of any form of commemoration of the martyrdom of Ḥusayn was thus a logical sequel to the court-case. At the same time, it was also thoroughly congruous with the tendency among the Ismailis, during the same period, to cut off their social ties with the Ithnaʿasheris.

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Thus the over-all development in the sphere of religious beliefs and practices of the Ismailis in East Africa (in common with the Khojā Ismailis in other countries as well) consisted of a fresh realization of the distinctive features of Ismailism. This re-assertion of the essential principles of Ismailism took place within an Islamic framework. At the same time, these principles were distinctive enough to set them apart as a separate group within the Muslim community. The Imāmat was the most characteristic feature making for this distinctiveness. The specific nature of the religious practices of the community (performed in the jamātkhānā), and the highly pronounced mysticism in the doctrine, were other features setting the Ismailis apart from the other Muslim groups around them.

One of the important developments in the social domain of the Ismailis in East Africa which we have considered in the last chapter was their emergence as a highly organized community, sharply demarcated from the other communities constituting its social milieu. Although the whole of the doctrinal system of the Ismailis in itself may not have been consciously directed so as to render various elements in it

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compatible with corresponding demands of the social milieu, one can nevertheless detect important co-relations between the two phenomena. A most important instance of this is to be found in the fact that in the religious thought of the Ismailis, a heavy stress is laid on the moral value of brotherhood, and the principle of mutual help. On the concrete level, this had the effect of serving as a catalyst in the emergence of the Ismailis as an exclusive community, with a well-defined social identity. In other words, the principle of treating fellow Ismailis as bretheren in faith, which was essentially a religious principle and was obligatory upon every Ismaili individual, served the function of bringing the Ismailis closer to one another. This led to a remarkable display of social solidarity and a constant readiness for mutual help. It was this passionate willingness to stand by one another in times of adversity, when new projects had to be undertaken, which was responsible for the various institutions that appeared in the economic, educational and social spheres of the community over the course of time. Hence the spiritual merit attached to the ideal of co-operation and harmony in the doctrinal system of the Ismailis furnished a strong

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impetus to the social progress of the community. In a nutshell, it can be safely stated that in the ultimate analysis, it was the religion which had the effect of cementing the Ismailis together, thus enabling them to pull their resources together with a view to the social betterment of the community members. This does not mean, of course, that the system of moral values in Ismailism, which at this period laid a most emphatic stress on the value of internal harmony and concerted effort in the community, was deliberately cultivated or explicitly intended for the development of the type of institutions that emerged in later years. That such an aim was part of the reason for this particular emphasis is obviously true. At the same time, it should also be noted that in the religious system of the Ismailis, the principle of mutual goodwill and love appears as a value in itself. The ultimate argument for the desirability of this principle is to be found in the specific details of the metaphysical component of the Ismailis' world-view. Nevertheless, in spite of this non-wordly connotation of the value of brotherhood, it is clear that the importance assigned to this idea had a definite and most concrete function from the point of view of the social

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advancement of the members of the community. This dual implication of the value attached to the quality of brotherhood within the community, i.e. the purely religious and ethical as well as mundane schemes of meaning attached to it, can be detected in a number of farmāns to the community made by both the previous Imam and the present one. Associated with the stress on the spirit of brotherhood was the severe condemnation of those attitudes or habits that were likely to provoke friction or animosity within the community. Thus slander, envy, enmity towards each other, and other destructive expressions of egotism, were severely condemned. Calumny, causing hardship to others, or coveting others' superior advantages, were all labelled as manifestations of a "spiritual disease". Similarly, solicitous care of the sick, the poor, or the infirm, was highly commended, for "if a man appropriates the property of an old, destitute woman, which he holds in trust (amānat) how can such a sin ever be forgiven? From such money, if one buys a single loaf, it will be a source of torment for him on the Day of Judgement, and demand a reckoning."[21] Thus attitudes or actions which fostered negative feelings towards one another were considered morally blameworthy, and this was

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emphasized time and again. Any friction or instances of negativism displayed in the community were considered injurious to the whole society, for the Imam and his followers were considered, in the religious system, as bound to one another in a mystical sense. Conversely, actions promoting the over-all welfare of the community were considered highly commendable. According to the teachings of the Imam, service to bretheren, in fact, was considered more meritorious than service dedicated to the Imam himself. Similarly, internal discipline and solidarity were considered to be absolutely necessary if the goals of the community were to be achieved. In this way, a strong feeling of unity was fostered in the community. To be sure, this theme was as much a characteristic of the Imam's advice to his followers elsewhere as it was of his farmāns to those in East Africa. For example, after the creation of Pakistan, the Imam urged upon his followers there not to consider themselves basically different from those of their fellow-believers who had migrated there from India, "for no Ismaili should say to himself, 'this man is a muhājir' or that 'this one is an ansār'."[22]

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The above farmān is an excellent illustration not only of the importance attached to the ideal of unity, but, even more interestingly, of the significance with which this ideal was invested on account of its being backed by a religious language. The use of the terms muhājir and ansār, which have an historical importance derived from the life of the Prophet, is highly interesting. A similar spirit pervaded the Imam's teachings to his followers in East Africa where, as we have seen, it had equally far-reaching effects. The following farmān is typical of the many advices given to the community on this theme:

> "As you have in your body the flesh and blood of your worldly parents, similarly you have in your soul that of your Spiritual Father; by this you should understand that you are the Spiritual Children of your Spiritual Father. You are the sons of one father and brothers to one another."[23]

Thus, on the basis of this essentially religious character of the emphasis on the value of co-operation and mutual help, the Ismailis developed a remarkable measure of solidarity in their communal organization.

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It was this quality which enabled them to exploit their resources on an extensive scale, and channel them into the numerous institutions they succeeded in creating. In the midst of this development, the Imam continued to provide his followers with the incentive to work harder, to draw closer together and to undertake increasingly ambitious projects. The principle of mutual good-will and co-operation now proved to have an immediate and tangible value. As the community applied itself to the task of strengthening itself through a highly specialized and intricate organization, especially during and after the period of the second world war, the Aga Khan III (who, his political career as the President of the League of Nations having come to an end with the onset of the war, had now retired to Switzerland), continued to remind his followers, through telegrams, of the importance of the saying "Union is Strength".[24] The principle he tried to instil into the Ismailis, as they extended and followed up the important projects they had undertaken for the social and economic advancement of the community, is tellingly summarized in the laconic motto the Imam himself sent them through a telegram - "Each for All and All for Each".[25]

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The present Aga Khan has laid stress on the need for a spirit of co-operation within the community on the same lines as did his predecessor. The following farmāns reflect most vividly the religious significance of this stress. Its implications for the efforts of the Ismailis in the social and economic fields are equally obvious:

> "Remember that both in this world and in the next, you will be greatly rewarded for loving your brothers and sisters and supporting each other on every occasion."[26]

And, on the same note:

> "Remember that every little service you perform for your brothers and sisters will be rewarded to you many times over."[27]

The discussion above leads us next to examine the relationship of the Ismailis to the other communities in East Africa, on the religious level. This is an important line of inquiry since it enables us to study one of the essential aspects of contemporary Ismailism on the basis of a specific mode of analysis. In the last chapter, we dwelt at some length on the subject

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of the relationship of the Ismailis to some of the other communities which constituted their social environment. In the discussion that follows, we shall attempt to study the dynamics of this relationship on the religious plane. In other words, we shall be asking the question, "What attitudes, derived from their religious ideas, did the Ismailis adopt towards the other important communities in East Africa with which it had dealings?" Since the Ismailis are Muslims, and since their religious system makes no express reference to non-Muslim doctrines, we shall limit ourselves to discussing the place of the Ismailis within the Islamic faith as a whole, in the East African context. In other words, therefore, we shall examine the relationship of the Ismailis, particularly with reference to their doctrinal system, with the other Muslim communities in East Africa. No doubt, the question of the attitude of the Ismailis to Islam is not necessarily the same as that of their actual relationship to the various Muslim communities domiciled in the country. Nevertheless, one can assume that their interpretation of Islam and their attitude to other schools of thought within Islam would influence, if not determine, their actual dealings

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with the Muslim communities with which they found themselves to be in contact. In its turn, the special features of the interactions of the Ismailis with the other Muslim communities would be reflected in their doctrinal system. Here again, therefore, we shall assume a dialectical relationship between the religious and the social spheres of the community.

Before going on with discussing the actual details of the standpoint of the Ismailis in regard to other schools of Islam, it is worthwhile to consider what lines of interpretation can be usefully employed in such a study. One particular mode of analysis is that suggested by that part of the sociology of religion which is concerned with the dynamics of sectarian movements. The classic study of the contrasting attitudes of the "church" and the "sect", which are two of the "types" in which Christian groups are classified, was made by Ernst Troeltsch.[28] In recent years, B.R. Wilson has brought to light interesting material concerning the emergence and subsequent careers of Christian sects.[29] Several other sociologists have also devoted attention to the contrasting phenomena of "sect" and "church" within the orbit of Christianity.[30] In general, the

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differences between the "church" and the "sect", as seen by sociologists such as those mentioned above, are as follows: The nucleus of sectarian protest is to be found in the uncompromising rejection of the prevailing social order. The church, on the other hand, has an over-all attitude of acceptance of the prevailing order. Motivated by the aim of dominating the masses, it attempts to compromise with the social order which experience has taught its members to accept as normal (although within this over-all acceptance there are degrees of compromise which a church is willing to seek). The sect, on the other hand, withdraws, or aims at withdrawing, from the social order, and is more often than not, in varying degrees, opposed to the state, which is an embodiment of the prevailing order. Owing to its renunciation of the aim of dominating the masses, the sect is usually organized in small groups. Moreover, in view of the centrality of opposition to the prevailing order in the idealogy of the sect, its members are more often than not drawn from the lower and disgruntled classes. While membership of the church is compulsory, that of the sect is usually voluntary. Understandably enough, again, the sect is anti-clerical in attitude and is

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hostile to official theologians. Indeed in most cases it is even opposed to learning. As a natural consequence of these attitudes, the sect displays a marked intensity in its religious ideas, and is inclined to lay stress on individual and inward perfections. There is thus an emphasis on an element of directness in personal religious fellowship - which is reflected in ideals of religious equality and brotherly love. Unlike the church, again, the sect generally causes its members to be united on a basis of personal intimacy. Its hatred for the church tends to be expressed in the accusation that the latter is somehow degenerate, in that it is alleged to have fallen short of the original spirit of the scriptures. In accordance with this, the sect calls for a return to the pristine simplicity of the scriptures. It is also overwhelmingly idealistic (at times, indeed, fanatically so), and tends to lay heavy stress on the conditions of poverty and frugality as indications of religious piety. Finally, its preponderant idealism frequently finds expression in millenarian expectations.

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Another interesting feature of the sociological description of religious groups is to be found in the hypothesis that a sect succeeds in retaining its essential characteristics only in the early stages of its development; that, sooner or later, it is compelled to undergo certain modifications in its peculiar temper and to settle into a more abiding form. This suggestion takes into account the fact that the peculiar intensity of religious fervour, so much a hall-mark of the sect, cannot be indefinitely sustained; that the sect is invariably forced at some point or another in its career to "deal" with the world, much though it may dislike such a transaction; that the desire for "respectability", the need for administrative institutions, as well as the relatively lukewarm allegiance of the second generation, lead to a tempering of the zealous idealism of the earlier phase. Such a sect, which has substantially abandoned or modified its original characteristics, is termed a "denomination".

It is at once clear that the system of classification based on the typology of the "church" and the "sect" is inapplicable in the consideration of Islamic communities and the nature of the relationship

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among them. For one thing, in the area under consideration, i.e. the East African countries, Islam is not a state-religion. This makes the study of the attitude of the Ismailis to other forms of Islam more complex. Again, one of the important institutions reflecting the difference between the church and the sect, viz. the ministry, is absent in Islam in the sense it is understood in Christianity. In the Ismaili community, the absence of the priesthood is all the more marked, and the task of imparting religious instruction is generally carried out by lay men of diverse occupations. Thus it is not in any way a matter of slightest surprise for an Ismaili group in a specific locality to have a doctor, the manager of a firm, or a prosperous businessman, delivering sermons on matters of faith. He may also expound points of doctrine or matters pertaining to the economic or social spheres of the community in the same breath. For these aspects of an Ismaili's life are not considered fundamentally diverse. Finally, it should be noted that the sociological studies of sects have generally been devoted to those religious groups who have only recently come into existence. In other words, such studies deal only with a time-span

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over which the emergence and the subsequent development of the sects can be observed without having to grapple with the difficulties created by a long history. These reservations make the application of the church-sect typology inapplicable in the c ase of the Ismailis. Nevertheless, the analysis is useful from the heuristic point of view. For it enables us to ask questions regarding such essential features of religious societies as their attitude towards the world, their moral and spiritual fervour, their ideas concerning their own role in the world, etc. It also enables us to consider how far such features may undergo alteration with the passage of time. The general line of inquiry suggested by this discussion will thus enable us to ask certain important questions regarding the attitude of the Ismailis in East Africa towards the other Muslim communities settled in the country, although the answers to these questions will not add up, naturally, to any one particular "type". Nor will the characteristics of the Ismaili community in this context be expected to be found in identifiable clusters.

Another specific line of inquiry which would enable us to ask certain helpful questions regarding the attitude of the Ismailis to other communities with

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whom they were related on the basis of their religious beliefs, is that suggested in W. Montgomery Watt's study of Islam. Watt considers the historical development of Islam and the integration of diverse peoples, as well as the emergence of schisms within the general body of Islam, to be determined by the "will to unity" on one hand and the "will to disunity" or, better still, the "will to separation", on the other hand.[31] These terms are intended not as theoretical concepts but "as indicating that there is in a society or a group a general trend towards or away from unity".[32] Thus, the various societies which over the course of Islamic history came to be integrated as parts of the over-all Islamic Society, were motivated by the "will to unity", the latter derived, of course, from a variety of economic, social and ideational forces. Conversely, the opposition of such groups as the Shīʿa and the Khawārij to the body-politic, was derived from the "will to separation", which, once again, owed itself to the combined influence of specific social, economic, and ideational factors. What is important to note in this connection is that these opposing trends described by Watt are

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extreme types, and that in practice one can detect degrees of integration and separation which fall short of both total assimilation and absolute severance. What is even more important, as Watt admits, is the fact that certain groups within a larger society may adopt a neutral attitude towards the other groups of which that particular society is composed: "Within a great society .... such as the Islamic empire, there are smaller societies, and membership of one of these does not necessarily involve opposition to others .... In such a case membership of one society .... may be accompanied by an attitude to other societies within the great society which is roughly one of neutrality .... Common membership of the greater society limits the opposition to other societies."[33] Bearing these general points in mind, we can now proceed to an examination of the attitude of the Ismailis in East Africa to the Islamic community at large. Since we have already examined the social dynamics of this relationship, and the actual events or concrete institutions that serve as a reflection of these dynamics in the last chapter, in what follows we shall pay attention mostly to the specific elements in the religious system of the Ismailis which throw light on this relationship.

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We have already seen earlier that under the leadership of the Aga Khan III, the Ismailis came to understand and expound the Islamic content of their faith more clearly. The Hindu elements in their theology and culture were correspondingly de-emphasized. The main result of this development was that they understood their doctrine in a more clear-cut manner, within the over-all framework of Islamic thought. The question at once arises, therefore, as to what particular standpoint did the Ismailis adopt towards other interpretations of Islam, embodied in the various Muslim communities. By conventional usage, of course, the Ismailis have usually been labelled as a "sect". The use of this term, however, is obviously question-begging. What is important to note is that the fact that the predominant drive in the Ismaili community in East Africa was towards being a self-contained society — and in this, as we have already seen, they achieved a remarkable degree of success — is an indication of their urge to preserve a separate and distinctive identity. In its negative aspects, this tenaciousness led to a markedly isolationist attitude, frequently characterized by a complacent aloofness from other communities. Again, as we have seen, the strong emphasis placed on the spirit of co-operation and

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mutual help in the community underlined its close-knit character. Through the central and unifying role of the Imāmat, through the distinctive set of beliefs and practices in the community, and through its multifarious institutions, the Ismailis came to be remarkably close-knit. Each member of the community recognized his fellow-member in a special and intimate sense. There was thus a unique sense of "fellowship", an intense awareness of belonging to a common body, which was responsible for an impressive display of discipline, solidarity, and mutual affection among the Ismailis. Regular attendance in the jamātkhānā and the immense importance ascribed to congregational prayer provided a spiritual impetus to these feelings. In the earliest years, the historical legacy of persecution had not yet been forgotten, and, perhaps, contributed to the tenaciousness with which the members of the community were attached to one another. The emphasis placed on egalitarianism, and on the ideal that the rich should not be haughty and neglect the poor, or that the wealthy members of the community ought to mix with the poor on equal terms, was also most striking. "In our religion, one may be a saiyad, a great man, or a small man, but

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they are all mumins .... Those men are great whose deeds are great."[34] — this farmān, and others like it, added to the importance of the virtue of brotherliness and equality and through the religious meaning with which it was invested. On the whole, these events contributed to what may be called an intense group experience. This experience was also paralleled by a corresponding intensity in the religious faith, consisting in the fervour with which the individual Ismaili sought to attain purity and perfection in the sight of God, for an unmistakably strong emphasis was placed on individual accountability before God.

Despite these characteristics making for a remarkable group solidarity and a marked intensity of religious experience within the community, the attitude of the Ismailis towards other religious groups, especially Muslim groups, was one of neutrality. In later years, this attitude changed into one of active friendship and collaboration. Thus the history of the relations of the Ismailis with other Muslims communities is characterized by an avoidance of antagonism in the early years, replaced eventually by

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a spirit of friendly co-existence. These attitudes were derived, of course, from the doctrinal system, which in the case of contemporary Ismailism consists, to a large extent, of the farmāns of the Imam. This important aspect of the religious thought of the community can best be studied by direct reference to relevant farmāns illustrating the standpoint adopted by the Ismailis towards other forms of Islam (a standpoint, incidentally, which also serves a highly useful purpose in elucidating their self-image).

We have already seen how, over the course of the initial phase of their settlement in East Africa, the Ismailis were faced with a dire threat to their distinctive identity through the conflict with the dissenting members of the community, most of whom seceded and joined the Ithna'asheri faith. Parallel to this development was the abolition of the recital of the Kisā in the community, and a gradual elimination of those practices which were liable to be confused with similar practices among the Shī'a Ithna'asheris. We have also noted the severance of social intercourse with the Ithna'asheris on the part of the Ismaili community. In the midst of these developments, the Imam tried hard to prevent a

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conflagaration or hostile encounter arising out of what was indeed a highly volatile situation. In practice, no doubt, it was a long time before the formidable intensity with which the Ismailis and the Ithnaʿasheris hated each other began to wane. This unmitigated antipathy towards each other left deep scars on both sides. As far as the Ismailis were concerned, it was even responsible for a feeling of exaggerated self-importance and an almost morbidly pronounced defensiveness. But the eventual outcome of the community's uncompromising attitude towards internal dissent which, if permitted to continue, was likely to lead to dilution or modification of the doctrine, combined with anxious pleas by the Imam for avoiding any active animosity, was the evolution of a distinctive pattern of religious ideas. The essential features of the resulting picture were as distinct from Shīʿa Islam (as represented by the Ithnaʿasheri faith) as they were from Sunnī Islam. By the same token, there was a greater willingness to accommodate the Sunnī interpretation within the orbit of general acceptance and tolerance than it would have been possible had the Shīʿa dogmas been carried to their logical extreme. Thus the over-all

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result of this development was a re-assertion on the part of the Ismailis of their historical distinctiveness and, consequently, of a marked sense of independence in the doctrinal system. At the same time, however, there was a clear demonstration of a sense of belonging to the religion of Islam on the whole, and this awareness was reflected in the farmāns of the Imam. Thus, the tendency to draw an absolute line between the Sunnīs and the Shīʿas and to consider them as being on opposite poles, and to identify Muslim groups as belonging to one or the other camp, is, in its extreme implications, far from justifiable as far as East Africa is concerned. A consideration of some relevant farmāns dealing with the developments we have been discussing would help to clarify them.

During his first visit to East Africa in 1899, the Imam, in a farmān made to the Ismailis at Dar-es-Salam, urged them not to nurse any animosity towards those who had opted out of the faith, for "to hurt anyone, to cause injury to him, to hurt his feelings, or to stir up friction" within antagonistic parties, were all condemned as signs of a detestable disposition.[35] In the same year, the Imam severely

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criticized the Shīʿa tradition of cursing the first three Caliphs of Islam, symbolized by the burning of their effigies. To direct abusive remarks at them, said the Imam, was a sign of one's own shortcoming, for "from the muʿmin's mouth there should be no words of curse or condemnation. The muʿmin's mouth is like a garden which always exudes the sweet scent of its blossoms."[36] On a similar note, several farmāns made by the Imam in India contained the same injunction to his followers to refrain from attacking the seceders or showing enmity towards them, and to accept the differences between them with tolerance and neutrality.[37] Again, at Zanzibar, in 1914, the Imam once again tried to convince his followers that it was undesirable to deride or belittle other faiths.[38] A message sent to the East African Ismailis in 1933 reiterated the same idea: "we always respect others' faiths and defend only when others attack ours."[39] In the same year, on meeting representatives of the jamāt in Muscat, at Bombay, the Imam remarked how satisfied he was to learn that the Ismailis in Muscat refrained from criticizing the first three Caliphs of Islam.[40] Several years later, the Aga Khan was to elaborate on the same theme at Karachi, in a farmān that had a wider significance

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for all the Ismailis settled in different parts of the globe:

"The Ismaili faith always looks ahead. It does not look behind. What happened a thousand years ago is now a matter of the past. Now you must concentrate on strengthening the faith. There is no need to revive old memories .... To encourage enmity between the Shīʿa and the Sunnīs amounts to weakening Islam. You should stop thinking about what Yazid was like. This is not our concern now. We are all brothers in the faith, saying the single kalima, 'Lā ilaha illā 'llāh, Muhammadun rasūlu 'llāh. You now ought to beware of today's Yazīd [i.e. new dangers to the faith] and refrain from doing anything that would weaken Islam. What is the point in continuing to think about what happened a thousand years ago? Why should one go on being bitter? This would lead to nothing but schisms within Islam, to futile recriminations between the Sunnīs and the Shīʿas, which should be avoided at all costs. There are those who believe differently. The Sunnite jamāt respects Muʿawiya. Why should we be hostile to them?"[41]

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Thus, on the basis of this anxious determination to avoid hostile recriminations between members of different sects, the Aga Khan tried to foster among his followers a sense of integral membership of the Islamic community at large. At the same time, as we have seen, the Ismailis retained their own distinctive tenets and practices which set them apart from the various other Muslim communities. The duality involved in this position was recognized by the Aga Khan in the following proclamations issued by him:

> "Ismailis have always believed and have been taught in each generation by their Imams that they hold the rightful interpretation of the succession to the Holy Prophet, but that is no reason why other Muslims, who believe differently, should not be accepted as brothers in Islam and dear in person, and prayed for, and never publicly or privately condemned, leave alone abused."[42]

And, on the same note,

> "It is the pride of the Ismailis that we firmly believe that the world of spiritual enlightenment has come as a truth from the inception of Islam to this day with the Imamate and carries with it

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> as one of its necessary consequences: love, tenderness, kindliness and gentleness towards first, our brother and sister Muslims of all sects and secondly, to those who live in righteousness, conscience and justice towards their fellow men."[43]

If these messages have been cited at length, it is because they best illustrate the noticeable change in emphasis as the years went by — the allegiance formerly demanded of the individual Ismaili exclusively by the community itself, was now re-channelled into the pursuit of a wider ideal. Nevertheless, such a position necessitated a modification in the attitude of the community towards the historical differences between the Sunnī and the Shīʿa. Accordingly, while the general conception of Islamic history among Ismaili authors had hitherto been essentially the same as the classic stand taken by the Shīʿas, namely that the Prophet himself had appointed ʿAlī as his successor and that the first three Caliphs had thus usurped his rights, the Aga Khan, in a proclamation in 1954 suggested a radically new interpretation of the origin of Shīʿas which is more in keeping with the predominant historical view within Islam:

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"Originally after the death of the Prophet, the Muslims were united and there was no question of Shiah and Sunni till after the murder of Khalifa Osman. Then the world of Islam was divided into two branches, which in Arabic means two Shiahs, namely two sections. One was known as the Shiah of Hazrat Aly, the other as the Shiah of Muavia. These two remained till such time as Imam Hasan made his peace with Muavia, when Muavia became the undisputed Caliph and the Shiahs of Muavia became the great central stream of Islam and the majority, while the Shiahs of Hazrat Aly remained as the other section. To that section of Hazrat Aly the Ismailis belong.

"They take the view that Hazrat Aly having himself co-operated with the first three Caliphs, it is not now for us to judge the first three Caliphs but to respect their memory as Hazrat Aly himself did all his life according to historians even in Persia.

"We believe that the Imamate belongs to the House of the Prophet but that for reasons best known to himself, Hazrat Aly did not raise the question during the lifetime of the first three Caliphs and that it is good enough for us not to raise the question which he did not raise himself.

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"In this way, though Shiahs of Aly, we can sincerely join in the prayer that Allah may in His great mercy forgive the sins of all Muslims."[44]

One cannot but detect in the above passages an example of the idealistic enthusiasm for Pan-Islamic unity which was an important characteristic of Islamic thought at this period. To a large extent, the Aga Khan's position as a leading figure in Islam during his time contributed to the impressiveness of his support to this cause. On this wider Islamic front, the Aga Khan, in his role as a Muslim leader rather than an Ismaili Imam, zealously espoused the conception of such an over-all unification:

"And as it is essential to re-establish the religious unity of the Ummat (the nation of believers) a real rapprochement and consequent union between Sunnis and Shias should be aimed at and worked for. Even a unification of the four judicial schools which exist within the orthodoxy itself may be realized. A tremendously powerful and unshakeable religious unity may thus be achieved."[45]

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Yet one may note that such views coming as they were from the Aga Khan, had an especial significance. For they clearly reflect a desire on the part of the Ismailis to negotiate with the other Islamic communities and to expand the frontiers of their own spiritual concerns.

Last but not the least, it is interesting to note that the present Aga Khan has shown himself to be predisposed in the same direction and as earnestly so as his predecessor, in the matter of establishing a spiritual and social traffic between his followers and the other Islamic communities. Like his grandfather, again, he has been lending material support to undertakings and projects which help towards making the barriers between the various Islamic communities less rigid and recalcitrant. Again, his farmāns to his own community regarding the necessity and the role of faith in their lives, contain as many references to Islam as to Ismailism. One particular indication of this policy of bringing about a more effective rapprochment with Islam, is to be found in his talk to the Muslim students at Makerere University College at Kampala, when he advised them to work towards a stronger emphasis on the common factors between the various

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Islamic school rather than the differences among them. For, to dwell on the differences between the sects, which he rather aptly called the tendency to "rub salt into historical wounds", was, he said, highly undesirable and inappropriate in the modern situation.[46]

To summarize the discussion thus far, we have observed how the Ismailis' conception of their own position in relation to other Muslim communities, and the importance of this conception in their value system, underwent an important change with the passage of years. Essentially, this change consisted in an increasingly stronger affirmation of the "will to unity". In the early years, the attitude of the Ismailis to the other religious groups forming their social environment was characterized by a position of neutrality. Any hostility or friction between themselves and the other communities was precluded by their doctrine, in which the necessity of peaceful co-existence had been strongly entrenched as an important value, through repeated farmāns of the Imam. In fact, the seeds of the "will-to-unity" that emerged in later years were to a large extent present in this initial attitude of neutrality. Meanwhile, within the boundaries of their own community, the Ismailis successfully retained their self-contained

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structure and their distinctive doctrines. An intense emphasis on co-operation and concerted effort within the community, and a readiness to accept the existence of other groups sharing common Islamic ideals thus went hand in hand.

Finally, in line with the developments we have discussed up to this stage, we might proceed to glance at the process of change in certain other aspects of the religious system of the community — a process which would clearly reflect, once again, a progressive elimination of Hindu relics in Satpanth Ismailism, and the corresponding emergence of a more distinctly Islamic orientation. It is necessary to repeat that the new emphasis, though explicitly Islamic, was neither wholly Sunnite nor simply Shi'ite in nature. Rather, it would appear to be an independent and distinctive form of Islam, with a preponderant mystical component. In this sense, therefore, it can be said that the change took place essentially in the direction of an emphatic re-assertion of Ismaili principles. Two aspects of the religious system which we may single out here, as most vividly reflecting this process, are the eschatology or the

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conception of after-life in contemporary Ismailism, and the daily prayer or duā recited in the jamātkhānās.

It is necessary here to recapitulate briefly the eschatological framework of Satpanth Ismailism (which has been discussed in the chapter on the gīnāns), in order to be able to see the contemporary view-point in perspective. As we noted then, the ideas concerning after-life reflect perhaps more vividly than any other part of the gīnān literature, the peculiar tension between the Hindu and the Islamic elements in Satpanth. The concept of re-incarnation and the idea of the futility involved in endless cycles of existence for those who failed to liberate themselves from this eternally revolving wheel of birth and death, existed alongside notions of paradise and hell which were clearly Islamic. In latter-day Ismailism, the theory of re-incarnations persisted as an important element in the eschatology. In this notion, in fact, one could most clearly see a cardinal aspect of Hindu philosophy retained in Ismailism. But over the passage of years, in the official teaching at least, this idea was almost entirely superceded by an alternative comprehension of the after-life. In keeping with the developments in other important aspects

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of the doctrinal system, the new conception did not tally exactly with the notions generally held among the Sunnīs and the Shī'as, but was rather a clear expression of the mystical strand in Ismailism. Thus the supreme paradise was seen as the state of bliss or rapture following upon the vision and experience of the Divine. Conversely, hell was thought of as the state of anguish resulting from the separation of the human spirit from its source, and consequently, the loss of the joy, the sustenance and the peace drawn from contact with the Divine. The most laudable aim of the mu'min was said to consist in the yearning for progress along the infinite ladder of spiritual progress - in other words, for an ever closer approach to the Divine Essence. The notion of a corporeal paradise, offering material comforts and pleasures, was criticized. For, in the Imam's words,

"The man with true understanding must have a finer aim, namely that the soul may return to that native abode whence it has come. He should ponder over this . He should ask himself where the soul will go after death, and he should cultivate such courage as would enable him to reach his real home.

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"Just as the water in a river finally pours into the sea, so does man's soul ultimately sink back into a fathomless ocean. The scul, too, has its own ocean for which it yearns, and it will one day merge into it. Man should always aspire after reaching his true home."

Criticizing the ambition on the part of believers to gain access to a paradise which offered material comforts, the Imam went on to explain his conception of the soul:

"You must ask yourself, within your depths, what the soul is. It is your soul within you which forbids you to act unreasonably and encourages you to act righteously."[47]

There are numerous farmāns regarding after-life but the one quoted above is typically representative, and serves to illustrate the notion of man in contemporary Ismailism, and the conception of his fate in the hereafter. In a nutshell, in Ismaili philosophy, man is considered to have a nature loftier in its essence than that of angels, but acts unworthy of this high stature are believed to make his soul "lethargic" or "dense", and, consequently, earth-bound.[48]

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We might next turn to the important subject of the duā or the daily prayer of the Ismailis, and consider the changes that it underwent over the course of years. The first point that immediately strikes one in connection with the practice of daily prayer among the Ismailis is the overwhelming importance ascribed to it in the doctrine. In his memoirs, the Aga Khan, describing his conception of Islam, made a special mention of the value of daily prayer and the benefits derived from it. As he put it, "Prayer is a daily necessity, a direct communication of the spark with the universal flame".[49] This notion was also emphasized in his farmāns to his own community. The times of prayer (i.e. dawn, dusk and late evening) were required to be observed scrupulously. The duā is always recited in the jamātkhānā during these three times of the day, and attendance is considered binding on all. However, in case one is unable to make it to the jamātkhānā on time, he is expected to recite the prayer on his own. This insistence on the regular and constant observance of the prayer is clearly intended to serve the purpose of re-inforcing the religious consciousness of each individual believer. On more than one occasion, the Aga Khan described the

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habit of praying daily as the foundation of imān (faith). The present Aga Khan, in his farmāns, has laid the same amount of emphasis on the value of daily prayer.

As we have noted earlier in this study, the duā is said to have been composed originally by Pīr Sadardīn, though one particular tradition, as we have seen, attributed the composition to Saiyad Dādū. Be that as it may, we know that from the very first, the principle of daily prayer was given a high importance. In the gīnāns, the believers are constantly urged to "remember" or "serve" God (the term "serve", judging from the context, appears to mean "pray"). We can, therefore, conclude with a fair measure of justifiability that from a very early period, the duā had been institutionalized as a regularly recited prayer. Again, as we have already seen, the duā was one of the most concrete and distinguishing marks of Ismaili identity. It was because of this that during the court-suit of 1905 references to it figured prominently in the evidence called from the witnesses. The duā was thus shown to be a vital part of the tradition which the community had inherited from its forbearers.

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Here we are concerned more specifically with the nature of the changes that affected the contents of the duā with the passage of time.

The first amendments to the duā are said to have been introduced by Pīr Shihābu'd-dīn Shāh al Ḥusaynī, who was the eldest son of ʿAlī Shāh, the forty-seventh Imam of the Ismailis and the second of the Aga Khans.[50] He held the important position of Pīr during the Imāmat of his father. Unfortunately, we are not told anything about the changes he is said to have introduced. Assuming he introduced important changes (either at the behest of the Imam or certainly with his approval), it is fair to conjecture that these would be in keeping with the ideas contained in his book, Risāla dar Haqīqate Dīn, which, incidentally, is characterized by a deep and intuitive understanding of Sufism, and an earnest exposition of the principle of the Imāmat. On the other hand Justice Russel, in his summing up after the proceedings in 1905-8, observed that the duā then in force among the Ismailis was practically the same as that which had been in force during the time of the Imam Hasan ʿAlī Shāh.[51] Hence it is possible that the changes may not have been

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substantial. Be it as it may, there is no record of any further change in the duā for a long time, so presumably it was the original duā (perhaps with some changes introduced now and then), which remained in force in the community for a long time. The dua was a lengthy one and contained a large number of Arabic and Persian terms, and several well-known phrases and prayers derived from the Islamic tradition. The link-words and the verbs, however, were Gujerati, so that one's over-all impression on going through it is of its being a Gujerati duā. The most vital part of the duā perhaps, was the pedigree of the Imams, which was thus recited three times a day. Apparently with the death of a particular Imam and the succession of a new one, the name of the latter was added to the list, thus lengthening the pedigree all the time. There was also a list of Pīrs, only a few important names from which, however, were actually recited. Another interesting factor to note is that the duā also included a list of Hindu deities, which were considered as signs or manifestations of the divine power, preceding and heralding the Islamic revelation and the Imāmat of ʿAlī and his descendants.

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In 1950, the Aga Khan III ordered important changes in the duā. Significantly enough, all terms derived from the Hindu background were now eliminated. The rest of the duā remained principally the same. In 1957, however, it was replaced by a completely new duā which is entirely in Arabic. Since it is this duā which is in force among the Ismailis to date, and since it helps to throw light on the re-shaping of certain facets of Ismaili doctrine in the historical circumstances through which it has passed, it is worthwhile to examine its contents briefly.

It is significant that each of the five sections of the duā in force among the Ismailis today begins with a verse from the Qur'an. The first section opens with the Sūrat-ul-Fātiha, and the last one, with the Sūrat-ul-Ikhlāṣ. Thus in its essence as well as form, the duā is but a re-statement of Islamic principles. It also includes re-iteration of the Islamic concept of God, through the Sūrat-ul-Ikhlāṣ, and through confessions of faith such as the following:

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"There is no deity but Allah, the living, the Eternal
(Hayy-ul-Qayyūm)
There is no deity but Allah, the True and Manifest Lord
(Malik-ul-Haqq-ul-Mubīn)
There is no deity but Allah, the Sovereign, the
Ultimate Reality.
(Malik-ul-Haqq-ul-Yaqīn)
There is no deity but Allah, the Lord of the Day of
Judgement."
(Maliki Yaumi-d-Dīn)

The supplications include a prayer for peace:

"O Allah, Thou are Peace, peace is from Thee, and a thousand forms of peace rest upon Thee. O our Lord, give us a life of peace, and make us enter into the Abode of Peace. Blessed art Thou the Most High, O Lord of Majesty and Reverence."

Furthermore it may be noted that each section of the duā opens with the Bismillah, and at the end of each part the worshipper is required to prostrate, saying, "O Allah, for Thee is my prayer and my prostration", It is also important to note that apart from these general articles re-inforcing the basic

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Islamic concepts, the Ismaili doctrine of the Imāmat is also vividly incorporated in the duā. Towards the close of each section appears the name of the Imam (i.e. the present Aga Khan). In the first section, for instance, blessings are invoked on "Muhammad the chosen, ʿAlī the favourite, on the Imams (who are) the holy (ones), and on the proof of Thy command (ḥujjat-al-ʿAmr), the lord of the Age (ṣāḥibu-z-zamān) our Imam who is present, Nūr Mawlānā Shāh Karīm al Ḥusaynī."

Finally, it is interesting to note that there is no imam among the Ismailis charged with the duty of leading the prayer. Any member of the community is entitled to lead the prayer, and in fact more often than not one finds the prayer led by an enthusiastic young child. This practice is consistent with the fact that there is no order of Ulema among the Ismailis. Sermons in the jamātkhānā are usually given by missionaries, but these do not form a separate category as such, and the subjects of their talk may range round either secular or spiritual matters, or may indeed by a combination of both. Similarly, the Mukhī and the Kāmaria, who preside over the congregation

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at each end of the day, are appointed on an honorary basis, and in their everyday life are engaged in normal occupations outside the community, just like any other Ismaili.

The general theme of this chapter has been the manner in which various elements in the ideational system of the Ismaili society were related to corresponding features of its social system. It is appropriate, therefore, to consider at this stage a most important factor in the doctrinal system of the Ismailis without which the development of the social institutions or the welfare projects in the community would have been impossible. In Chapter II, we noted the fact that one can find several references in the gīnāns to the practice of paying the dasond or tribute to the Imam. The payment of the tribute was one of the most important expressions of the mu'min's relationship to the Imam and was a symbolic indication of his allegiance. In the Khojā Case, as we have seen, the evidence of regular payment of the dues, which was contained in account books, submitted in the court, helped to identify the allegiance that the Ismailis accorded to their Imam. Lastly, it should be noted that the central importance of the payment of the tribute in the community was constantly a focus of

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opposition on the part of the dissenters. Much of the protest of the dissenters in the two court-suits, for instance, centered round this theme. As one of the dissenters pointed out in an "open letter", "no religious ceremony is performed in the Jamat Khana which is not associated with the payment of money enjoined on the followers."[52]

It is obvious that the phenomenal development of the social institutions and welfare projects in the community under the leadership of the Aga Khan III and the present Aga Khan to a large extent depended on this practice. Under the directions of the Aga Khan III, the precedent was established whereby the money collected locally in any one area as tribute to the Imam was re-distributed in the same locality, to maintain the existing institutions or sponsor new ones. The task of collection and re-distribution of the tributes is carried out by local leaders, under the over-all supervision of the Imam. What was and is essentially a religious practice, has thus come to be the chief source for the maintenance of the numerous institutions of the community. Here we see the religious and the social aspects of the Ismaili society

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connected in a straightforward fashion. Thus, in effect, the Imam turns out to be a vast central clearing-house, as it were, who receives offerings and enables massive funds to be raised, and re-distributes them in the form of grants to the various institutions of the community. In this way, the practice serves the vital function of maintaining the numerous institutions of the community. And yet it is important to note that in its essence, the practice of paying the customary dues derives its ultimate validity and support from the religious principles of the community. Perhaps never was the idealogy more aptly summed up than in the judgement delivered by Justice Russel in the court-suit of 1908, when, explaining the principle of "reciproxity" involved in the payment of tribute to the Imam, and its re-channeling into communal projects, he quoted a passage from a Hindu treatise, where "the king is thus commended. 'He took taxes from his subjects only for their own good as the sun draws vapour up, to return it a thousandfold to earth in the shape of rain.'"[53] This could as well have been said of the Ismaili ideology concerning this matter. For the belief of the Ismailis in this regard is strikingly similar.

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Chapter VI

The Ethic of Secular Progress and its Religious Vindication

The over-all picture of the Ismaili community in East Africa which emerges from the discussion in the previous three chapters is one of a prospering and well-organized group of people, with an elaborate set-up of institutions for handling the numerous projects that the community undertook over the years. This in fact is also the picture that readily imposes itself on the outsider, no matter how cursory and superficial his observation may be. As a matter of fact, it is because this feature of the Ismailis in East Africa is conspicuous even to the most casual observer, that we are led to consider it as an essential end-product of the history of the community. The exceptionally striking nature of the social system of the Ismailis in East Africa owes itself to the contrast that this particular feature poses in relation to the other communities. It is because of the fact that the Ismail community stands out as different from other communities in its organization, in the systematic

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manner in which it seeks to provide for the secular needs of its members, and in the tenaciousness with which the followers uphold their sense of belonging to a common ethos, that these features come across so vividly to the outside observer. None of the other communities in East Africa have attained a comparable degree of organization or undertaken as many economic, educational, or welfare projects with a similar degree of success. It is this contrast which makes the remarkable success and purposefulness of the Ismailis in this respect particularly conspicuous. Hence, the studies of several writers serve to bring out not only the image of the community as a highly "prosperous" one, but also the immediately arresting character of this image, so that only the most imperceptive observer can fail to be impressed by it.

The general impression of the lay observer from any of the non-Ismaili communities has been simply that the Ismailis are "richer" than the others. Now in terms of statistical verification, it is but difficult to uphold or substantiate such a statement. This is not to say that systematic investigation leading to such a conclusion has ever been attempted. After all it is difficult to speak of the total or aggregate income of a community with even the qualified precision

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with which it is possible to speak of the "national income" of a particular country. It is, therefore, impossible to say, especially when reliable statistical investigation along such lines is lacking, that one particular "community" is "richer" than a nother, or vice-versa. But the general impression that the Ismailis are a "rich" community, which is the impression that comes across readily to the non-Ismaili audience, has deeper roots than those which can be understood in terms of its financial resources. The immediate source of this impression is to be found not in the economic resources of the community, but in the manner in which these resources have been pulled together to erect the economic institutions in the community. Next, an essential source of this image is also to be found in the numerous welfare projects that the community has put up, such as schools, hospitals, sports clubs, etc. Last but not the least, this image of the community as prosperous or cohesive points to a vital and fundamental truth about its world-view - namely the religious zeal with which the Ismailis have always been seen to be impelled in the direction of such endeavours as would advance and sustain their material prosperity. In recognizing the above factors, we succeed in analysing the general image of

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the Ismaili community as a "prosperous" one, and in tracing it to its root-source. We thus come to understand what it is precisely that makes the Ismailis known as a "prosperous" community, and what lies behind this impression. When this is grasped, one cannot but realize that the substance of this image covers a much wider realm than that of simple economic gain. To begin with, it points to the element of organization which renders possible the maintenance of the large-scale and multifarious institutions built by the community. At a deeper level of analysis, however, it points unmistakably to the existence of an enormous incentive to create such institutions in the first place. That the Ismaili community is a highly organized one, and that this capacity on its part to organize itself has been channelled into the creation of numerous welfare institutions, is a vital truth about the community. That there has been a constant supply of inspiration and incentive to extend this organization, and to multiply the institutions it has enabled to be created, is a more subtle truth which leads us at once into the fascinating realm of the interaction of religious ideas and ethical standpoints towards the world-order.

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Now any Ismaili, when asked about the source of the extraordinary zeal with which he has come to accept, admire and support the institutions created by the community, will automatically refer to the leadership of the Imam. Here he will be right. As we have seen through the course of this study, the position of the Imāmat in the structure of contemporary Ismaili society has been of a decisive and overwhelming importance. The tactfulness with which the Aga Khans have directed the affairs of the community has been an additional factor contributing to the present form of its structure. In the next chapter, we shall be dealing with the various levels on which the Imāmat has served as a vital nerve-centre of the functioning of the community. We shall also try to identify the various areas on each of these levels within which the Imāmat has had a decisive impact. For the moment, we are concerned with a slightly different issue, though the role of the Imāmat, as we have seen, has been intimately connected with every important development in the community. The question we are asking ourselves at the moment is: What were the factors that not only made the vigorous pursuit of secular progress in contemporary Ismaili society possible, but also made

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it imperative, in the minds of individual Ismailis, that such an ideal be espoused as an eminently desirable one? The question can be also phrased differently as thus: What were the specific elements in the general orientation and temperament of the individual Ismaili which encouraged and impelled him to seek his wordly betterment in conjunction with the other members of the community? In other words, what were the psychological sanctions that created in the mind of each individual Ismaili, a systematic and unrelenting search for better life (in the sense in which we are going to define this below) for himself, as a member of the Ismaili community, under the guidance and leadership of the Imam? In order to be in a position to answer these questions, however, it is necessary first of all to be clear in our minds about the exact nature of the development of which we are seeking to locate the causes.

Broadly speaking, the core of this development consisted of a vigorous and enthusiastic espousal of the ideals of worldly self-perfection (the term "worldly" is used here to denote the sphere not covered by the term "religious" in the strict sense, if the latter is taken to stand for those concerns and pursuits which

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are related to the conceptions of the soul, God, and the supernatural world as a whole). According to the sense in which we have used the phrase "wordly self-perfection", therefore, we include in the phenomenon we are considering, the general principle inherent in the Ismailis' energetic efforts in the spheres of education, social welfare, economic development, etc. What is common to all these spheres, it may be noted, is what can be called the spirit of wordly progress, the principle that to excel in the legitimate domain of one's wordly life (and the "legitimacy" of these domains is determined directly by the moral code), is not only essential, but a desirable ideal. This ready and warm welcome of opportunities for further development and progress in various fields of wordly life is a highly characteristic feature of contemporary Ismaili society in East Africa. (It is also an equally characteristic feature of the Ismailis in India and Pakistan, in other words, of Khojā Ismailis in general, but the consideration of the developments in these areas and the differences and similarities between them and parallel developments in East Africa is outside the scope of this study). A second important factor to note - a factor which is directly associated with the first and is again highly characteristic of the

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Ismailis - is the emphasis on a systematic and "rational" patterning of life in contemporary Ismaili society. There is of course a general sense in which one can talk about the tendency in an individual or in a society to pursue definite goals in a continuous, systematic and planned manner, and all that we can assert at this point is that in the policies of the Ismaili community regarding wordly advancement, such systematization is markedly visible. Thirdly, one can never over-emphasize the fact that these developments in the community have taken place on an organized basis. The spirit of wordly betterment that we have noted as one of the most outstanding characteristics of the Ismaili society and which has found concrete fulfilment in specific goals and projects, has manifested itself in concerted and organized effort. These factors are essential to bear in mind if the process which we are discussing in this chapter is to be understood in a precise manner.

Now it is a well-known fact that none of the other Indian immigrant communities in East Africa achieved a comparable breakthrough in a direction away from the traditional assessment of the secular order. For all these communities, coming as they did from India, were

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tied to the peculiar characteristics of the Indian ethos, derived in a large measure from the structure of Indian society. In East Africa, all these communities were faced with a markedly different situation, which demanded a new and appropriate approach and organization that would enable these communities to adjust themselves to the singular features of the social milieu in which they found themselves. In other words, what was necessary was a modification or alteration of the traditional scheme of values and social organization. For this would enable them to make some headway in the direction of the "modernization" that presented itself as an inescapable necessity. Such an undertaking, however, would demand new resources which can be broadly divided into the three factors that we have discussed above in connection with the Ismailis. Each of these communities were constrained to make specific adaptations in order to render their social organization more compatible with the circumstances in East Africa, and this was effected in varying degree in the different communities. However, in none of them was the task of adaptation carried out in such a thorough-going manner as it was in the case of the Ismailis. The difference between the Ismailis

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and the other Indian communities in this respect is best revealed through the absence, in these other communities, of the type of institutions which formed such a prominent and distinguishing hall-mark of the Ismailis. At a further stage of analysis, one can locate this difference in the relative absence, among the Indian communities, of those ingredients of adaptation that we have noted in the case of the Ismailis. In the first place, none of these communities showed a comparable readiness to pursue "wordly progress" with such a calculated, self-conscious and single-minded zeal. Associated with this is the relative absence among these communities of a "rational" and systematic pursuit of goals as distinct from traditional methods of life. Lastly, one of the most important areas of difference between the Ismailis and the other immigrant Indian communities is to be found in their social organization. For none of the latter communities came to organize themselves so systematically as the Ismailis did. These observations can be illustrated by briefly considering each of the important Indian communities in the country in this particular light.

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Among the Hindus, although the pattern of social organization in India (in terms of the caste-structure) was not strictly observed in East Africa (owing to circumstances rendering such conformity impossible), the basic pattern of traditional attitudes in social relationships was still retained. This traditionalism was to be found in matters ranging from dress, diet and language on one hand, to religious values and moves on the other. For example, though the Patidars (by far the largest Hindu community in East Africa) adopted certain secular ideals based on Western criteria, the close ties they had with India, in common with other Hindus, compelled them to maintain certain affinity with Brahmanical ideals upheld in that country. For this was the only way in which they could hope to be accepted when they returned to India. Moreover, the Patidars never pursued economic gain or other secular aims on a concerted basis — i.e. as a community. The extent of communal organization among them was limited to township boundaries, and there was no over-all institutional network linking the various Patidars in different areas of the country. Again, their organization was largely based on the kinship and village system prevalent among their people

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in India. For instance, even in East Africa, they scrupulously followed the principle of village exogamy. On the other hand, the Lohanas tried harder to break themselves free from the limiting influence of traditional outlook and organization, and to develop institutions which would cater for their altered needs in the new country. They failed, however, to establish institutions of the type which the Ismailis undertook, though some of the richer members of the community had "hoped to make use of the contributions and savings of the whole community in the same way as the Shia Ismaili insurance and finance companies." [1] This was also related, of course, to their failure to form a united community organized on the same pattern as the Ismailis. A similar degree of traditionalism, particularly noticeable in rigid adherence to the customary manner of dressing, was to be found among the Sikhs. Furthermore, they, too, were markedly reluctant to organize their community on a scale at all comparable to the Ismailis. The only community which really adopted Western ideals and thus to a remarkable extent developed a modern outlook, were the Goans. However, as we have seen, in regard to the important institution of marriage, they conformed to strictly

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traditional requirements.[2] Nor did they systematically follow the ideal of secular progress as an ethically desirable end in itself, as the Ismailis did.

Turning to the Muslim communities, Hollister, writing about the Ithnaʿasheri sect, commented that the Mujtahids "appear to be bound to the past, not less than the Sunni 'Ulama; almost oblivious of onflowing currents in an advancing world."[3] Furthermore, as Morris notes, the Ithnaʿasheris in East Africa, like those in India, "have always resisted the formation of effective centralized institutions".[4] The Bohras were organized as a relatively more corporate group, but in their case again, a deeply ingrained element of traditionalism acted as a powerful brake on any movement towards an effective breakthrough in the direction of modernization and the introduction of changes in their value system.[5] It was this refractory nature of the traditionalism strongly entrenched in the social structure of the community that provoked vigorous outbursts of dissatisfaction from its younger members. These members "want to abolish the custom of giving expensive caste dinners on the occasion of marriages and funerals ... they shave their faces clean....

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they adopt the Western style of dress, which is most unusual among their people .... they wish to establish hospitals, high schools and other institutions for the uplift and progress of the community."[6] Nevertheless, this "reforming" group in the community has remained a minority to this day, and, owing to the strength of the traditional element in the leadership, has been largely unsuccessful in achieving its aims. Lastly, it hardly needs stressing that the Sunnī population in East Africa lacks even the rudiments of the type of organization that we have seen in regard to the Ismailis. Thus we are left with the highly significant and thought-provoking fact that of all the various Indian communities in East Africa, the Ismailis are the most corporately organized, most systematic in their pursuit of secular goals, and most whole-heartedly dedicated to the steady pursuit of material benefits as an ethically desirable end in itself.

This situation leads us at once to ask what is the mainspring of this singular drive among the Ismailis for worldly self-perfection. In other words, what were the distinctive facts about the Ismaili community in East Africa which impelled them, in contrast

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with the other Indian communities, to adopt as one of their priorities the modernization of their traditional way of life? And what factors enabled them to achieve the remarkable success in this endeavour that has been so often noted by observers?

Now it is impossible to find the roots of this singular development in the environmental factors affecting the community in East Africa. As we have noted in an earlier chapter, the conditions affecting the various Indian communities in East Africa were basically the same. The scope and the nature of economic opportunities available to the various communities were the same. In fact, when it is borne in mind that the British administration in its dealings with the Asian community showed total obliviousness to its sub-divisions, we gain an even greater justification for concluding that the environmental pressures on all the communities were essentially identical. During the Colonial period, discriminatory regulations which restricted the rights of the Asians to own land and which thus forced them into the trading occupations, particularly in Kenya, affected all the Asian communities in the same manner. To be sure, a number of Indian communities beside the Ismailis proved

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themselves as "successful trading communities", a description normally applied to them. Furthermore, outstanding businessmen are to be found in most of the important Indian communities. The general reputation of the Asians as thriving traders is all-embracing, and the Ismailis are not considered as extraordinary in this respect. The image that the Europeans and Africans have of the Asians (an image which is partly based on certain prejudices or antagonism that is sometimes displayed, justly or unjustly, towards them), affect the Ismailis as much as anybody else. And in the post-independence phase, if the Ismailis appear to be enjoying more favourable conditions than the other communities, it is not because they are considered inherently different from other Asians but because most of them happen to be citizens, owing to guidance to this effect from the Aga Khan. Nevertheless, none of the other people in question pursued the economic upliftment of the community as a whole, nor did any of these communities ever establish institutions of the type that the Ismailis sponsored through concerted and communal endeavour. In other words, none of the Indian immigrant communities apart from the Ismailis organized themselves as systematically as the latter, for the economic benefit of the community as a whole.

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And when it comes to welfare institutions such as schools, hostels, hospitals and dispensaries, sports clubs, etc., it is well-known that the Ismailis have been most assiduously keen in sponsoring and multiplying such institutions. But as we have seen, in regard to both economic and political conditions, and legislative measures, the Ismailis had to confront the same circumstances as the others. Any attempt to locate the the differentiating factor in question in the fields of administrative policy or economic opportunity is thus bound to turn out to be unjustified.

Nor can the differentiating factor be found in the conditions affecting the Indian migrants in the period preceding their migration to East Africa. Almost all of the migrant communities (except the Sikhs and some other numerically significant groups) came from Punjab, Kutch, or Kathiawar. The essential cultural traits of these communities, such as language, diet and other important components of their style of life were broadly similar . Moreover, except for the Punjabis and the Sikhs, most of the other communities, who were trading communities, came from a similar commercial background in India. In view of this, it is hardly possible to attribute the almost dramatic singularity of the Ismailis in the process of

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modernization and social development, to the relatively minor differences that might have existed in the social conditions affecting them and the other communities in India before their migration. What is more, we have no evidence whatsoever to suggest that the Ismailis in India might have been exposed to significantly different social conditions from those affecting all the other communities in question. We therefore have no option but to look elsewhere for the factors determining the systematic endeavours of the Ismailis in the realm of economic and social modernization in East Africa. We have thus eliminated all the important variables which are worth considering in our search for the factor responsible for the singular nature of Ismaili organization - all that is, but one, namely, the religious system.

The most salient feature of the religious system of the Ismailis, of course, is the belief in the continuity of the Imāmat, represented at the moment in the person of the Aga Khan. The consequences of the concept of Imāmat on the religious and social life of the Ismailis, and the direct effects of the personalities of the late Aga Khan and the present Imam on the social organization of the community, have been

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most decisive and far-reaching. In fact, a close examination of the structure of the community leads one to conclude that the Imāmat has been the ultimate mainspring of the important features of the religious as well as the social system of the Ismailis. We shall therefore try to show the overwhelming importance of the Imāmat in the Ismaili society in the next chapter. For the moment, however, we are concerned more with the immediate psychological impetus to the spirit of secular progress in the Ismailis. Thus, at the moment, we are not concerned with the question as to what was the ultimate source of this psychological temper. As we shall see later, it was intimately bound with the Imāmat. Nevertheless, it is first necessary to examine the ethical orientation which gave momentum to the developments that we have discussed. For it is reasonable to assume that since the Ismailis displayed such marked determination and fervour in their efforts to attain material prosperity, their system of values must have been conducive to such a pursuit. What in turn was the source from which such values were derived, and what fostered and promoted the ethical sanctions for secular progress, is a different question. The answer to the second

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question in no way affects the validity of the answer we find to the question as to what ethical sanctions furnished the motivation and the incentive for such a development in the first place. It is with this first link in the chain, namely with the connection between the ethical orientation of the Ismailis and their concrete achievements in the secular field with which we are concerned in this chapter.

Now the classic study of the social implications of ethical ideas embodied in the concept of salvation held in a particular faith, and the manner in which it is thought it can be procured, is Max Weber's. Thorough-going and meticulous as it is, in Weber's study the central focus of interest is the way in which the phenomenon of economic rationality in the West, which he called the "spirit of capitalism", was related to the specific character of Protestant (especially Calvinistic) asceticism. But Weber's interest also enveloped the wider field of the relationship of religion to society, and the manner in which the two forces interact and modify or influence each other in specific circumstances. As his observations are directly relevant to the phenomenon we are investigating in this chapter, it is

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worthwhile considering his central ideas in a brief and summary form, so that we may be able to ascertain whether these ideas help us in our study by setting us onto a specific trail of inquiry.

A decisive concept in Max Weber's scheme of analysis is that of "rationality". In some important respects, Weber's analysis of religion was evolutionary. For, in the many avenues of differentiation along which religion might develop in its departure from the most elementary forms of religious organization, Weber saw an over-all movement towards rationality. This development, however, could be accelerated, impeded, or halted, by a multitude of factors. Hence, the lines along which religious systems evolved were likely to vary from one civilization to another. The end-product of these differences were to be found especially in the realm of ideas concerning salvation, and these in turn had important consequences on the practical lives of the believers, particularly in their attitude towards the world-order. This, in a nutshell, is the over-all framework of Weber's thesis, within which he examined the careers of specific religions in detail.

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According to Weber, the most rudimentary form of belief in the supernatural consisted of an admixture of magic and religion, of taboos and religious ethics, and these two divergent strands were represented by magicians and priests respectively. The most decisive breakthrough from the traditional form of religious expression was triggered off by the "Prophet", who was a prototype of charismatic leadership. The "Prophet", as distinct from the priest, the "philosopher", the social reformer, and other kinds of religious leaders, furnished a most potent force through which the existing social order was effectively overhauled. Furthermore, Weber developed the important distinction between the "ethical prophet", who based his teachings on his claim to be the recipient of a divine mission from God, and the "exemplary prophet", who invited others to emulate his own ideal mode of life. According to Weber, most of the important bearers of prophecy in the Near East belonged to the former type, while those in India and China could be classified as examples of the latter. Another interesting proposition in Weber's discussion at this point is that what he labelled as "ethical prophecy" was, in his view, distinctly tied with the concept of a "personal, transcendental and ethical god."[7] We have

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noted the relevance of these ideas to Satpanth Ismailism in the chapter on the gīnāns, so that it is not necessary to go into details regarding this point here.

Weber also noted that the prophet's mission was almost always antagonistic to "the magical elements of the priestly enterprise".[8] Whether such a conflict ended in victory for the prophet or in his martyrdom, in both cases the priestly class was faced with the necessity of codifying either the new doctrine or the old one which had survived the attack launched on it by the prophet. The basic principles of a prophetic religion cannot for long be left indeterminate, and it is this factor which leads to the formation of creeds and dogmas. However, the scope for such codification is seldom unlimited. For it tends sooner or later to become "officially closed against secular or religiously undesirable additions as a consequence of a struggle between various competing groups and prophecies for the control of the community".[9] Moreover, such a stoppage of the development or augmentation of the creed "was generally accounted for by the theory that only a certain epoch in the past history of the religion had been blessed with prophetic charisma".[10] Lastly, another interesting

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observation made by Weber was that the priestly dogmas remained susceptible to the modifying influence of magical elements prevalent amongst the laiety. On the other hand, certain classes within the laiety might turn out to be the bearers of a distinct rationality in outlook. This led Weber to a lengthy examination of the relationship of various social classes to different forms of religious belief. However, we are not directly concerned with this. What is of central importance for our purpose here is the proposition that the development of religious systems towards or away from the phenomenon of rationalization can take place in varying degrees and along different paths. The one important area of religious belief and ritual which most clearly reflected differing degrees of rationalization consisted of the ideas concerning salvation. As this is the backbone of Weber's study of the relationship of religious ethics to worldly vocation and since much of our discussion of related features of the Ismaili society in this chapter is going to be based on this section of his study, it is worthwhile reviewing it in some detail.

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Weber's examination of the concepts of salvation in different religious faiths is a corollary to a general discussion of the different kinds of theodicies which seek to reconcile the notion of a good god with the "fact" of evil in the world. One particular kind of attempt at procuring salvation was to be found in adherence to specific rituals. This was bound to lead to discontinuities in the life of the believer for a variety of reasons. First, by promising the believer that he could atone for his sins by carrying out prescribed rites in a proper (and in fact mechanical) order, this notion was liable to encourage a sense of complacent assurance in his every-day dealings. Secondly, the experience of devotion and ecstasy in ritual worship, even when such a mood was successfully attained, was bound by its very nature to be irregular, sporadic, and ephemeral. But a religion could get round this difficulty by insisting that if one's religious practices were to produce the desired results in the first place, one's whole life ought to be informed by a strict conformity to an ethical pattern of behaviour. Those religious systems which had moved farther in the direction of rationality usually adopted the second standpoint. Here again, Weber

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suggested a bifurcation — and one which is crucial to his thesis. Broadly speaking, one may envisage such salvation either as the achievement of the stage when one became the vessel of the divine, or as the attainment of the status of an instrument of the divine. The former was the path of contemplative mysticism; the latter, of what he called "asceticism". It is important to note that Weber's primary dichotomy between what he had called the "ethical" and "exemplary" forms of prophecy was continued through his whole thesis. For he held that that particular brand of salvation which was sought through an ethic of purification designed to enable the believer to become a fit instrument of the divine, was closely associated with the belief in a transcendent God. For the great chasm which separated such a Being from his creatures could not but counteract notions of mystical union with him. In turn, such a conception of the deity was the product of "ethical" prophecy. Conversely, "exemplary" prophecy failed to give birth to such a conception, with the result that it afforded room for the flowering of ideas concerning absorption in the deity.

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Now, according to Weber, the influence exerted by asceticism on the believer's daily life was fundamentally different from the corresponding influence of contemplative mysticism. Furthermore, Weber noted two different ways in which he thought asceticism could influence the believer's life. If the pursuit of salvation entailed "a formal withdrawal from the 'world': from social and psychological ties with the family, from the possession of worldly goods, and from political, economic, artistic, and erotic activities - in short from all creaturely interests", such an attitude was what he termed "world-rejecting asceticism".[11]

"On the other hand, the unique concentration of human behaviour on activities leading to salvation may require the participation within the world ... of the religious individual's idiosyncratically sacred religious mood and his qualifications as an elect instrument of God. This is 'inner-worldly asceticism'."[12]

"As a consequence, and although the enjoyment of wealth is forbidden to the ascetic, it becomes his vocation to engage in economic activity which is faithful to rationalized ethical requirements and which

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conforms to strict legality. If success supervines upon such acquisitive activity, it is regarded as the manifestation of god's blessing upon the labor of the pious man and of god's pleasure with his economic pattern of life."[13] In addition, such an attitude to the world compels the believer to refrain from attaching excessive feeling to the material aspects of existence, while, at the same time, a sober, dutiful and moderate participation in worldly activity is considered not only desirable but also imperative and essential.

Thus the manner in which the "ascetic" strove for salvation involved a careful balance between avoidance of the world and acceptance of it. Diametrically opposite to this attitude, according to Weber, was the outlook fostered by contemplative mysticism: "For the activity of contemplation to succeed in achieving its goal of mystic illumination, the extrusion of all everyday mundane interests is required ..... These subjective and mystical beliefs may result in absolute flight from the world."[14] While both attitudes were essentially world-denying, there was an important difference in both the nature and the degree of the denial: "The ascetic rejects the world's empirical character of creaturliness and ethical irrationality,

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and rejects its ethical temptations to sensual indulgence, to epicurean satisfaction, and to reliance upon natural joys and gifts. But at the same time he affirms individual rational activity within the institutional framework of the world, affirming it to be his responsibility as well as his means for securing certification of his state of grace. On the other hand, the contemplative mystic living within the world regards action, particularly action performed within the world's institutional framework, as in its very nature a temptation against which he must maintain his state of grace."[15]

It was on these lines that Weber developed his famous proposition regarding the influence of the Protestant ethic on the rise of Occidental capitalism. It is important to remember that the "spirit of capitalism", whose roots he was attempting to locate, is an abstraction, in that it is a principle distilled from the salient features of capitalism which he singled out with a view to systematic analysis. The principle of capitalistic acquisition for its own sake contrasted sharply with those forms of economic activity which reflected the phenomenon of what he called "traditionalism".[16] His chief purpose was

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to ascertain the motivating drive behind the principle of a systematic, calculated, and rational pursuit of economic gain. Weber saw a powerful source of a psychological state conducive to such capitalistic activity, in the Calvinistic conception of pre-destination. According to this conception "each individual's state of grace was determined by God's inexorable choice, from the creation of the world and for all time. It was as impossible for the individual to whom it had been granted to lose God's grace as it was for the individual to whom he had been denied to obtain it."[17] Now Weber rightly suggested that this belief, with its logical corollary — namely that human actions can by no means change or interfere with God's absolute decrees — must have had terrifying psychological consequences on the believer. For, deprived of any outward indications as to whether he was one of the elect or not, as well as the means whereby he could attain the status of being one of them (since this had already been determined in advance), the Calvinist found himself in an agonizing mental impasse. However, Calvin had also taught that if an individual strongly believed that he was one of the recipients of grace, it meant that he had in fact

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received such grace, and "to attain that self-confidence, unceasing work in a calling was recommended." For, through such work "the believer strengthened his self-confidence as the active tool of the divine will."[18] If, moreover, such activity was crowned with success, it was a clear proof that the believer was one of those who had been predestined for salvation. At the same time, the merit attached to constant and rigorous adherence to one's vocation was modified by the provision that such activity was not to be indulged in for its own sake but only out of a stringent sense of duty, and for the greater glory of God. The result was a characteristic example of "inner-worldly asceticism". Thus, "this religion demanded of the believer, not celibacy, as in the case of the monk, but the avoidance of all erotic pleasure; not poverty, but the elimination of all idle and exploitative enjoyment of unearned wealth and income, and the avoidance of all feudalistic, sensuous ostentation of wealth; not the ascetic death-in-life of the cloister, but an alert, rationally controlled patterning of life, and the avoidance of all surrender to the beauty of the world, to art, or to one's own moods and emotions. The clear and uniform

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goal of this asceticism was the disciplining and methodical organization of the whole pattern of life. Its typical representative was the 'man of a vocation', and its unique result was the rational organization and institutionalization of social relationships."[19] In its practical consequences, "this ascetic conduct meant a rational planning of the whole of one's life in accordance with God's will. And this asceticism was .... something which could be required of everyone who would be certain of salvation. The religious life of the saints, as distinguished from the natural life, was .... no longer lived outside the world in monastic communities, but within the world and its institutions. This rationalization of conduct within the world, but for the sake of the world beyond, was the consequence of the concept of calling of ascetic Protestantism."[20]

The Weberian thesis provides us with a useful tool for a systematic study of the relationship of the ethical ideas in Ismailism with organizational advances which we have noted in the previous chapters. As a matter of fact, Weber's analysis turns out to do more for us than merely suggest parallel lines of inquiry. For one cannot but be struck by an impressive similarity

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between the ethical system of early East African Ismailism (i.e. during the early years of the Imāmat of the Aga Khan III and the period immediately preceding this phase), and some broad patterns of "inner-worldly asceticism" which Weber thought were especially conducive to a rational mode of life. Even if we set aside Weber's explanation of the influence of such an ascetic outlook on everyday conduct, we are still left with the apparent chasm between the "ascetic" temper in Ismailism and the activities of the community in the secular field. How are we going to explain the co-existence of two attitudes which appear so unmistakably and so plainly contradictory to each other? Surely, for the intense aversion to what was seen as the polluting character of the world — this indeed was a major component of Ismailism, as we shall see below — and the whole-hearted and unflagging desire for worldly betterment to exist alongside each other, there must have been a relationship, perhaps even an alliance, between the two attitudes. If such an alliance existed beneath the surface, so to speak, this does not in any way impair the validity of our proposition, for religious ideas are not always consciously addressed to social ends. We shall, therefore, endeavour, in what follows

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below, to show: (a) that, broadly speaking, the ethical teaching in Ismailism was similar to the kind of attitude that Weber called "inner-worldly asceticism , (b) that this attitude acted as a potent leverage in causing traditional attitudes to be displaced, and a "modern" and systematic ordering of life to take its place, (c) that, as time went by, the correlation between the religious teachings and social developments among the Ismailis assumed a more conscious and self-evident form — that, henceforwards, the religious ideas in the community served as a direct support and stimulus to the urge for progress in secular life. Our task below will be to try to verify these propositions through specific examples and references. First of all, however, it is important to note certain objections to this application of the Weberian thesis which are inherent in several important dissimilarities between the examples with which Weber supported his propositions, and relevant features of Ismailism. We shall, therefore, try to pave the way to the ensuing discussion by examining these dissimilarities and investigating as to what extent they nullify (or fail to nullify) the general pattern of our argument.

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As we have seen, the Calvinist's notion of an inscrutably transcendent God, and his belief that God has pre-assigned salvation or damnation for His creatures in accordance with an irrevocable degree, occupied a central place in Weber's attempt to show that the ethics of the faith had had a powerfully stimulating influence on rational activity. Now this may at once lead one to point out that while the general conception of God in Islam views Him as utterly transcendent, there is no idea in Ismailism at all equivalent to the Calvinist doctrine that God has singled out an elite as bearers of His grace from beforehand, and that nothing that a man does can alter His immutable decree. No doubt, the idea of predestination is by no means alien to Islam and, over the course of history, it figured centrally in certain schools of Islamic theology. Nevertheless it is debatable whether it was held in so absolute a form as to lead to anything bearing the far-reaching conclusions which appeared in Calvinist doctrine. One may, therefore, ask whether there is any justification for comparing the emergence of planned and rational economic activity in the West with developments of a similar nature among the Ismailis, when the concept of

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salvation among the latter is so markedly different from that in Calvinism which (according to Weber) had a decisive influence on economic life in European countries, wherever its influence was felt. This is a pertinent question, but it involves oversightof an important link in the chain of interaction between religious ideas and social evolution. When this is understood, it becomes evident that the doctrinal difference does not in any way affect the validity of a comparative treatment of the two societies in the context under question. For, in an important sense, this difference is beside the point.

In considering the influence of religious ideas upon social and economic behaviour, it is important to note that the immediate impact from the religious sphere emanates not from intellectual dogmas, but from the psychological temper either impelling the members of the society towards action or exertion in a certain direction, or discouraging them from such action. No doubt, the "state of mind" as we may call it, can to a certain extent be traced to specific elements in the dogmatic system of the faith. Nevertheless, the dogmatic system is not the immediate source of the impetus or drive behind the specific mode of conduct in

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question. Weber's own analysis of the relationship between capitalism and the Protestant ethic was based upon an explicit recognition of the distinction between the dogma of the immutable decree concerning salvation, pronounced by the transcendental God, and the "ascetic" outlook stemming from the tremendous tension this dogma created in the minds of the believers. Accordingly, he admitted that this psychological impetus to methodical rationalization "could doubtless in itself have been furnished by various religious motives ... The Calvinistic doctrine of pre-destination was only one of several possibilities."[21] The importance of this point for our study cannot be over-emphasized, and it dispels the misconception that would arise of the dogma that engendered a particular kind of psychological drive was confused with that very drive.

In the case of the Ismailis, the ultimate source of the energy and impetus which was channelled into systematic pursuit of worldly self-betterment lay in the Imāmat. The absolutely binding demand for obedience to the Imam, and the anxious wish on the part of the Ismaili to prove himself, in the eyes of Imam, as his worthy follower, was responsible for a peculiar intensity. The historical experience of

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persecution, and consciousness of being a minority group were additional factors contributing to the intensity of the religious experience in the community. We have already seen how this was reflected in the cohesive spirit which was evident among the members of the community. Moreover, as we have seen, the emphasis on individual accountability before God was thorough-going. It is not difficult to see, therefore, that when the migrant-Ismailis found themselves in a new land, free from the skirmishes and contentions in India and offering them better economic opportunities, these factors gained an added importance. Anxious to prove themselves as worthy of the Imam's leadership (and the Imam had a central place in their religious world-view), as they studied his thoughts and strengthened the ties among themselves, they found themselves on the threshold of a major break-through. In this process, the ethical precepts of the faith were of decisive importance, for they furnished a powerful impetus to the undertakings and the projects of both individual believers and the community as a whole.

Another major objection to the application of Weber's thesis to the situation of the Ismailis, may

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arise out of the fact that whereas Weber was interested in exploring the roots of the distinguishing hall-marks of Capitalistic activity, in the case of the Ismailis we are dealing with a much wider entity --namely, the principle of secular advancement in general, of which economic progress is but a part. And this, indeed, is entirely correct. But our argument in this chapter is based on the premise that between what we have called the spirit of secular progress among the Ismailis, and the economic complex which was the focus of Weber's investigation, there is something fundamental in common. * To begin with, although the central focus in Weber's study was a specific economic phenomenon, its scope extended over a much wider area. For the "state of mind" which according to Weber, had served as a factor conducive to the rise of capitalistic activity in the West, involved the principle of a rational and systematic ordering of life, and a solemn

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* The word "progress" may invite criticism and its use may indeed be deplored, for it may very well suggest that we are applauding the developments among the Ismailis as a measure of contrast with the "less advanced" state of the other communities. It may be mentioned here that although such an attitude is difficult to avoid altogether in some instances, the word "progress" or its syncnyms, or the comparisons that we have drawn (and will find it necessary to draw further below) between the Ismailis and the other communities in order to illustrate our argument, are intended in as "neutral" a sense as it possible to do so. By the "spirit of secular progress", of course, we mean the desire to excel in the non-religious sphere of one's life. Unfortunately, there

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dedication to labour in one's "calling". The principle involved here was that of assiduous activity and devotion to worldly gain, so far as this was carried out in a "righteous" manner. In even more general terms, Weber's primary interest was "in the bases on which religious orientations can exert leverage toward evolutionary social change."[22] It is this broader dimension of Weber's study which we hope to utilize in this thesis as a guide-line. For in the case of the Ismailis what we are interested in at this stage is the social evolution of the community, and the increasing differentiation in its organization. Having come from a social milieu in which traditionalism was all-pervading, the Ismaili migrants in East Africa found themselves confronted with the necessity of making a breakthrough in the direction of a new mode of organization and a new form of social life. The principle underlying the new structure was the principle of desiring the best and doing the best in the cause of worldly self-betterment. The quintessence of this

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is no comprehensive term or phrase through which this idea can be conveyed both fully and concisely. The principle underlining what we have loosely called "secular progress" or the like, will become clearer through the course of the discussion.

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drive was also the quintessence of the systematic pursuit of economic gain with which Weber was concerned. Thus the common factor in the two processes consisted of a systematic and planned pursuit of goals which were evidently "worldly" in character, though they may have been but a means towards purely non-worldly ends. Part of the social change among the Ismailis — apart from the organizational changes we have described in Chapter IV — involved the adoption of a new life-style, a new pattern of behaviour manifesting itself in the cultural life of the community. This change can, therefore, aptly be called "cultural change". And the form in which this change took place can be broadly called "modernization". The full meaning and import of these statements will become clearer later on. Here it may be noted such a change also demanded the weakening of traditionalism as a pre-requisite. The broader fringe of Weber's interest can therefore be focussed onto this area of the history of the Ismaili community, in order to enable us to identify those factors which facilitated change in this direction. These considerations are sufficient to dispel any claim that Weber's analysis does not possess a scope large enough for it to be utilized in

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studying a development in the Ismaili community which includes, but is broader than, the process of economic rationalization. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that Weber's analysis is not used here as a model in the absolute sense. It has been employed more as a guiding-line for a systematic study of those factors which served as the immediate source of the drive, the direction and the incentive behind the new "progress-orientated" disposition among the Ismailis in East Africa.

These considerations lead us directly to the ethical system of the Ismailis. An examination of the ethical ideas in the community would enable us to formulate an answer to questions such as these: What was the place of the material world in the philosophy of the Ismailis? How did they "measure" this world on the scale of their religious propositions concerning life? What ethical control did their religious system advocate with a view to successful containment of life in the world, so that it was in harmony with their over-all conception of the ideal life? It is with these questions in mind that we must proceed to examine the developments in the ethical teachings of contemporary Ismailism.

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The initial attitude of Satpanth Ismailism to the world-order, as set out in the gīnāns was, as we have noted in Chapter II, one of indifference and aloofness. The world, according to the teachings of the gīnāns, was a vast ocean of temptation, and the believer had to guard himself constantly against its devious ways. The tension between the ethics of the faith and the world-order which was inherent in this attitude was responsible for a distinctly ascetic outlook. For the believer was constantly enjoined to work persistently at purifying his spirit through prayer and devotion, so that this would stand him in good stead in the life to come. Any instance of succumbing to the temptations of the world, or any signs of interest in material aggrandisement, were seen as a capitulation to the deceptive fascination of the grand illusion that is the world. The only way to experience the reality that transcends the world of appearance was through adopting a posture of severe detachment from the continual succession of images that constitutes the physical world. As a result of this standpoint, any degree of inner attachment to the material aspects of life was considered dangerous for

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the believer's spiritual welfare. The end-product of this attitude of dispassionate detachment was an inner act of withdrawal. However, it should also be noted that in the literature of the gīnāns, the life of the traditional hermit or yogī is far from glorified. Thus, with all the eremitic implications of the world-view of in the gīnāns, the conventional hermit has no place in it. Nevertheless, as we have seen earlier, this characteristic interpretation of the cosmos and of man's place in it failed to give birth to a systematic ethical code. For the primary emphasis was on attaining that inner mystical bliss which accompanied union of the human spirit with the divine essence. Since we have discussed this element in the gīnāns in detail in Chapter II, we have not attempted here to do more than recapitulate these ideas. For our purpose in the context of this chapter, it is necessary to bear in mind two facts of substantial importance: (1) that the "ascetic" attitude towards life which emerged later and which we are going to discuss further below was already present, in an embryonic form, in the gīnāns, (a) that despite this, the nature of this attitude was different in some essential respects — and not least in the degree to

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which it was worked out in detail — from the latter-day developments that we shall now proceed to examine.

The first treatise to which one may turn in order to learn about the ethical orientation towards the world-order in later Indian Ismailism, is the Risāla dar Haqīqat-i-Dīn, written by Shihābu'd - dīn Shāh al Ḥusaynī (d.1885). Here one finds unmistakable beginnings of what we have earlier referred to, in Weber's terminology, as "inner-worldly asceticism". This work is of special interest because, written in the form of a direct address to fellow-believers, it is characterized by a relatively simple style and reflects a palpable sense of piety. Owing to these reasons, it was popular in the community. One may, therefore, conjecture that it must have had a wide impact even in those early days when the standard of literacy was low. In any case, the book serves as an excellent illustration of the prelude to the latter-day synthesis of the two opposed attitudes of acceptance and rejection of the world-order. The tension normally springing from the disparity between the ideal expectations of a religious system with regard to the world, and the actual state of affairs, i.e. the world as it really is, can here be seen in its most vivid form.

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Equally striking is the attempt to resolve such tension through "inner-worldly ascetism", namely, the attitude of fully accepting the duty to make one's living through normal occupation, and yet being constantly on guard against the temptations of the world. The translator of the text provides us with an apt summary of this attitude (though not with the same interest in mind as ours): "If the author invites his readers to renounce the world and to sever their connection with worldly pursuits, he by no means wishes them to leave their homes and pre-occupations, to wander in the world as religious mendicants. This is one example of what may be called a standardized expression suggesting the desirability of an accent on spiritual values as against being completely absorbed with thwughts of material advantages in life. He says explicitely that the proper discharge of one's duties and honest earning of subsistence are highly commendable ways of worshipping God."[23] Since this attitude came to be so decisive in later years, it is rewarding to examine it in further detail.

It is interesting to note that the book begins with the very theme we have been discussing above. The introduction to this theme consists of the narration of

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an alleged anecdote in the life of the Prophet when, on the return of a number of companions from a military expedition, he "greeted them as men who had participated in a jihād-i-asghar, or the smaller war in the cause of religion, and said that they still had to take up the jihād-i akbar, the greater war. Whereupon they inquired from the Apostle of God, asking: 'What is the jihad-i akbar?' And he replied that the most glorious war is that which one wages against his own vile instincts (nafs-i-ammāra)."[24]

Now here we already find the believer or mufmin called upon to prove his mettle on the battle-front. His true worth has to be constantly shielded from the polluting influence of the baser side in him. This can very well be imagined to lead to a state of most acute tension, and it would be a natural consequence of the attempt to resolve such tension, that the believer should plunge into activity in the world in order to exercise his powers of self-discipline and self-mastery. However, what forms the author's conscious theme up to now is the necessity of subjugating one's lower self, of having it, indeed, "under the keenest surveillance, so as not to let it have one single moment of opportunity to escape from

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control, and force its will upon one. If this is not done, it may take one out of the way, overpower one's will, raising its head from the Hell, and thus prevent one from attaining the position of communion with God."[25]

Now the stress on constant mastery over the baser elements in one's personality may lead to world-rejecting conclusions. As if to forestall such conclusions, in the next section the author makes it a special point to emphasize that life is man's most precious possession: "You can never imagine anything as precious as life, each moment of it. Who can regain even a moment of life that has passed? This is why I say that it is priceless, for what can replace it? It is a kind of capital (naqd), by the investment of which one can acquire the treasures of the mercy of God for oneself."[26]

So far, however, what the writer is trying to convey all the time is that the believer's spiritual life should consist of an internal battle — a war waged with that part of one's self which seeks to distract him fromacquiring spiritual merit. But this inner tension soon appears, on a magnified scale, in one's external environment. How is the true believer

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seeking to gain rational control of his mind, to behave in the world, since face it he must? The answer involves extending the principle of this principle of rationality into one's whole life. This means that the life of a believer would be expected to be systematically planned, in a manner which reflects an inner self-mastery: "think not that you have enough to do attending to the matters of the affairs of this world, of the daily bread and domestic worries! No, you can do this. You can remain faithful to the command of God, to be His servant while keeping the affairs of the world in a flourishing condition, even in a better order than usual.

The great religious authorities have divided the day and the night into three equal parts, each eight hours long. And if you do the proper things which are prescribed for each part of the day and night, you will succeed in your spiritual progress as well as in your worldly affairs. One part is assigned for sleep, and also food, domestic affairs. One is to be spent in following his occupation in earning one's subsistence. And one part is to be devoted to the worship of God, whose object is the attainment of the salvation and eternal life."[27]

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What we see here in a clear and unmistakable form is the principle of organizing one's life on rational lines - that is to say, of ordering one's life in accordance with the very gist of the religious proposition, so that through self-mastery proved in the very act of living, one can avoid being swamped by wild and unruly instincts. A distressing feeling of the imminence of ākhirat or the hereafter provides the immediate support for the intensity which adds to this idea a tremendous emotional force. Thus what is recommended is nothing short of a total and systematic mastery of life. It is significant that in the following pages, the author draws a sharp distinction between 'aql (reason) and nafs - a term which he uses for the "emotional self". Reason is the watch-dog, so to speak, with whose help man can keep his emotional self under control; it is also the path to God. The emotional and instinctual forces in man, on the other hand, are always on the point of erupting onto the surface, and thus disrupting his systematic endeavour to organize his life with a view to earning God's pleasure. It should be noted in this connection that the course of conduct recommended to the believer is by no means that of worldly acquisition. However, in the author's insistence that the goal of the true

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believer ought to be the achievement of self-mastery, the approval of worldly success is already present in a latent and incipient form. For such mastery can only be achieved and realized in practice, that is to say, in worldly activity. At the same time, worldly activity is not considered desirable in itself, but only when it is subjected to a rigorous spiritual discipline. This line of thought culminates in an apparent paradox; for we find the attitudes of acceptance and rejection of the world co-existing at the same time and in close proximity to one another. Note for instance the following advice, which is in keeping with the central theme so far: "Suppress the impulses of your lower self, and do not tie up so much of your thought with the matters of worldly life." It is clear that this sentence, taken alone, suggests that the believer is expected to refrain from active participation in worldly affairs. The sentence which immediately follows it, however, and one which is equally crucial, cancels this impression and suggests an almost opposite conclusion: "Realize that if you do not permit the external world to trample you under its feet, you will command it."[28] These two sentences, following one another, make the writer's ethical

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philosophy very clear: "worldly life should certainly be lived; not, however, with the intention of revelling in its pleasures and comforts, but with the aim of conquering its very nature.

Thus in the Risāla dar Haqīqat-i-Dīn we already find the clear beginnings of that austere outlook on life that was to dominate the ethical philosophy in Ismailism at a later stage. The next important illustration of this outlook is to be found in the farmāns of the Imam Sir Sultān Muhammad Shāh, during the early years of his Imāmat. The farmāns over this period embody the same intensity of censure of the world, the same spirit of anguished self-searching, the same mood of perpetual vigilance intended to save oneself from being caught off-guard by one's lower self, and the same harrowing quest for salvation through and despite activity in the world. In considering these farmāns and the ethical orientation they bring to light, two points of vital importance need to be noted. Firstly, the connection between the ethical ideas in these teachings, and the flowering of the incentive for undertaking innovations (which, as we have seen, constituted a major breakthrough in the history of the community), is not straightforward or

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explicit. As a matter of fact, it would often appear that the two phenomena were mutually contradictory. This, however, does not nullify the role of the ethical ideas in encouraging the breakthroughs we have considered, for, as we have indicated earlier, the relationship between the two phenomena was apparently paradoxical. The second important point that deserves careful attention is that on close inspection one can see that the doctrinal system of the community influenced its social change in a number of different ways. In other words, one can detect several points of interaction between the two processes; thus, different components of the religious and ethical teachings of the community, or different clusters of such components which form well-marked or distinct patterns within the over-all system, influenced the social life of the community along different routes. In examining these teachings, therefore, these fine distinctions will have to be borne in mind.

To begin with, one may note that in this early phase of Ismailism, the attitude towards the world-order expressed in terms of spiritual and ethical ideals, was identical with that which we noted in the work discussed above, and which corresponds to the

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attitude Weber called "inner-worldly asceticism". Even a most cursory survey of the farmāns in the period under consideration (roughly from 1899 to 1910) cannot fail to impress one with what in fact forms the overwhelming mood of these teachings - the tension created by the discrepancy between the yearning for spiritual progress and the naked and grim realities of the external world. This tension in turn is responsible for repeated exhortations to the believer to maintain an intent watch on his thoughts and actions lest they get out of hand and cause him to stray from the path of spiritual righteousness. This experience of acute tension, of an almost oppressive anxiety to steer one's life systematically in the world, carefully dodging myriads of temptations which rear their head every now and then, is embodied in vivid imagery and telling analogies. A striking example is the analogy of a train-passenger, who is unable to relax or sleep while he is on the train, for the simple reason that he is carrying valuables with him, and is therefore anxious all the time for the safety of his possessions. The theme of the analogy is alertness and self-control; for the believer is exhorted to be similarly vigilant in his daily life.

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The potential danger to his spiritual being (which is the priceless treasure he carries with him in his sojourn on the earth) is believed to lie not in any outside agencies but in the unruly forces within his psyche. This idea leads to a strong emphasis on the need for a feverish and anxious searching of one's inner self, on an introspective analysis consisting of a continual watch on what is called the "spiritual pulse" of one's being.[29]

Another analogy consists in the picture of a man riding a horse, with the reins safely in his hands. Just as the rider adroitly preserves his balance and his control over the movements of the horse, so should the rational and ethical faculty in man reign supreme over his instinctual forces. The believer should maintain sovereign authority over himself, so that his life-energy is channelled, in a planned and systematic manner, into the service of spiritual upliftment. Thus, self-discipline is the quality that should dominate one's life. Again, some farmāns speak of the precariousness of man's situation in earthly life. Thus, he is said to be standing at a junction of two paths leading in totally opposite directions. One carries man to his ultimate destruction through the

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fragmentation of his inner self, resulting from the untramelled explosion of blind passions which toss him to and fro in chaotic confusion. Conversely, the other route, if followed, enables him to attain spiritual bliss, through the "purification" of his instinctual forces and the triumph of the more rarefied, "loftier" element in his nature. Once again, the tension is felt with manifest intensity. It gives rise to a succession of images, a noteworthy one of which is that of a man trying to make his way along a mountain-pass, with a gaping abyss on one side and sharp rocks jutting out on the other. As the climber labours strenuously to reach the peak, which alone is his goal and which alone keeps him going, he has to maintain his balance with hairbreadth precision, lest he plunge headlong to his death by losing his foothold. This vision of earthly life as a lonely, perilous and steep journey, with the pilgrim plodding his way steadfastly on, surrounded by wild storms raging around him, vividly illustrates the severe intensity which characterizes Ismaili religious thought in this particular phase. But the decisive implication of this vision on the believer's conduct in life lies in the conviction that it is <u>this</u> world which forms the arena for this grand and dramatic battle. It is

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here that the heroic victory of the nobler element in him over the lower forces is achieved. And it is here, therefore, that the light in him dispels the darkness and thus transforms it into light. This is expressed in the Imam's interpretation of the pulsirat of Islamic theology, as merely another name for earthly life. It is man's dealings in this life, his transactions with his fellow-men, and above all, his encounter with the dualism in himself, that constitutes the tightrope across which he has to make his way in order to arrive at the shelter and security of his "native abode".[30]

Now this belief that one's personality, especially in its relationship with the world, consists of two opposite elements, one of which can bring about true spiritual fulfilment, whereas the other can unleash destructive forces powerful enough to crush the very core of the personality, naturally leads to the quest for subjugation of the negative forces. Hence a "correct" attitude to one's worldly life is important, since, in capitulating to it, the believer capitulates to his own lower self, and in rising above it, he rises above the ravaging forces within his own psychic depths. The advice given to the followers in the teachings we are considering embodies a dualism,

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which corresponds to the dualism that poses the problem in the first place. The resolution of the problem created by the co-existence of good and evil in the world and in one's own self can be summed up as: active participation in the external world, counter-balanced, however, by a posture of inward detachment. To begin with, the world is seen as a "prison". Man's condition in it is that of a prisoner or an exile: "The soul is encaged in the body. For the mu'min it is imperative that he should liberate it from its fetters so that it can move about freely in a higher world. While the soul is in the body, it is confined. Till the spirit is yoked to the body, it will not be able to see anything else. But when it gets free of the body, its vision will expand. While it is encaged in the body, it will be unable to extend its vision ahead, behind, or sideways. The mu'min should say to himself, 'it is better for me if I break away from this prison'."[31]

Yet, if the context of this farmān is borne in mind, it becomes clear that in the Imam's view, the "prison" is not the body itself, but the state of being unable to apprehend anything beyond what is amenable to material or sensuous experience. Putting

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it another way, it is not the body itself, but the condition of being hopelessly tied to it, which constitutes the state of imprisonment. And liberation is attained not through death, but through the ability to participate in a higher life while continuing to lead a physical existence. This requires an attitude of detachment from one's material possessions, though the latter are not inherently corrupting. In other words, the aspiring believer ought to create a sanctuary in his heart, from which the ebb and tide of one's worldly life is excluded. Thus, the true faqīr is said to be he who is humble in spirit, irrespective of whether he is wealthy or poor in material terms.[32] Hence, ideally, the mu'min is expected to preserve his spiritual integrity through a stoical self-detachment:

"If you are working very hard and earning a lot of money, by all means go ahead. But do not let the inner core of your self be swamped by your success. If you find yourself prospering, do not get carried away by it. If you lose everything that you have earned, do not allow yourself to sink into a state of despair or hopelessness." And, on the same note:

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"If you look around in the world you will realize that there is not a single man who can always remain free from affliction. Illness, hardship, old age and death are inevitable for every single man ..... Man is bound to suffer from illness and affliction, but the mu'min never allows himself to despair because of such suffering. Even if the mu'min is fatally ill his heart is illumined and pure. No matter how heavy a burden he has to bear, he never ever breaks under its weight."[33]

We can identify a number of theological ideas and motifs which provided the immediate sanction and driving-force to this form of ethical outlook. One conspicuous element in the religious temper of this period is a pressing consciousness of the akhirat, or the hereafter. In the perspective of infinity, man's span of life on earth is considered extremely brief. After death, each man, it is believed, will have to account for his own deeds. This conception of individual responsibility for one's behaviour in life, and the absence of the idea of intercession, contributed to the intensity of individual religious experience. Man stood alone before God, shorn of the trappings with which he was adorned in the eyes of the world. Moreover, the

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conception of the immanence of God led to the feeling that the believer had to be righteous in the eyes of God, since he was, so to speak, under constant divine scrutiny. In addition to this, the stress on an inner transformation of the personality as distinguished from external conformity to rites, underlined the subjective and extremely personal character of the religious experience in the faith. As a result, the believer found himself confronted by what he saw as an inescapable necessity on his part of constructing his own spiritual life, by setting out on an anguished search for the "golden mean" between the two extremes of succumbing to the world, and running away from it. This conception of religious rites as a part — though an essential part — of an over-all way of life, is an important facet of Ismaili theology at this stage, and it definitely contributed to the ethical orientation we are considering here. Weber made the significant observation that a religion which makes salvation available as the product of a mechanical performance of ritual "leads directly away from rational activity". Thus, "virtually all mystery cults have this effect. Their typical intention is the accomplishment, by the sheer

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sacredness of their manipulations, of redemption from guilt and the distribution of sacremental grace. Like every form of magic, this process has a tendency to become diverted from everyday life, thereby failing to exert any influence upon it."[34]

The ethical notions we have discussed above are noteworthy in their own right, from the point of view, for instance, of comparative religion, philosophy of ethics, etc. Here, however, we are trying to ascertain their sociological implications. How was this characteristic dualism in the attitude towards the world — a dualism revealed in the simultaneous acts of outward acceptance and inward retreat from daily life — related to the hearty, vigorous, and tireless pursuit of worldly betterment, which emerged as so distinctive a hall-mark of Ismaili society at a later period? One can think of three chief ways in which the two phenomena can be reconciled. Firstly, one may conclude that the two attitudes were contradictory, and that the intense religious ardour and "distancing" of the world in the earlier period was replaced by an equally earnest espousal of worldly life at a later period. Alternatively, one may take

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the view that the two attitudes simply came to co-exist. Yet another conclusion one may adopt is that the earlier attitude was related to the latter-day development in a definite, albeit subtle, manner. This of course would mean that the peculiar compromise between acceptance and rejection of worldly life, which was part of the overwhelming intensity of the earlier phase, was continued or extended into, or even helped to bring about, the later position marked by positive striving after worldly progress. Those who might take the first view would be faced with the necessity of explaining how an attitude which was charged with so much energy, and which was sanctioned by such a powerful religious fervour, came to be replaced by a totally opposite attitude. Those supporting the second position would be confronted by the by no means less difficult task of explaining how such contrasting attitudes were able to co-exist. The third position can be argued on the basis of the general trend of the Weberian theory regarding the influence of religious thought on worldly activity. Since it is only along this line that we can hope to provide a reasonably satisfactory explanation of the development we are considering here, the other two positions can

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be safely dismissed, for the burden of proof lies on those who might wish to uphold either of them.

Before we go on to consider how the two attitudes under question were related to one another, and how, in fact, the first of them served as a prelude to the second, there are two considerations of vital importance one ought to bear in mind. Firstly, we must admit that this discussion does not provide a straightforward description of the religious and ethical ideas in Ismailism in the period under consideration. For it has been necessary to mould the data provided in the teachings propounded during this period in accordance with the analysis to which we have subjected it. In other words, the requirements of the analytic framework we have sought to employ have forced us to work through the available data, singling out elements that seem to be inter-related, and arranging or ordering them to constitute distinct categories. This process of "sorting out" the material and re-shaping it or classifying it for it to be amenable to a certain line of analysis is inevitable in any systematic study. At the risk of appearing to state a most obvious fact, we may emphasize that the distinctions and connections that

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we see do not exist in the data itself, since they are the product of the specific sociological perspective that we have adopted. Needless to say that if different schemes of analysis (say, for instance, a philosophical one) were to be adopted, the material would yield itself in a correspondingly different shape.

Another point which demands clarification is the extent to which we would be justified in ascribing a causative role to the religious ideas we are considering, in the development of that attitude we have called, in general terms, the "spirit of secular progress". Clearly, one has to be wary about the temptation to single out one specific feature and look upon it as the only source of the distinctive spirit of the ethos of the community. Other factors, consisting primarily of favourable combinations of circumstances can by no means be ruled out. In this connection, for instance, it is most essential to bear in mind that the Khojā Ismailis were a merchant community to begin with, when they migrated to East Africa. It is inconceivable that religious ideas can work in a vacuum, and the existing commercial occupation of the community can be said to have provided a foundation, an essential base, for the

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specific influence of the religious ideas. Given these reservations, however, and in view of the fact that despite the common social and political climate to which the various Indian immigrant groups were exposed it was only the Ismaili community which made an organized breakthrough from the traditional mode of life, it becomes clear that the religious ideation was the most determining factor in this development. For if one were to offer an alternative explanation, it would be essential to produce evidence regarding another factor or a group of factors constituting an exclusive feature of the Ismailis, as opposed to the other Indian communities. However, we cannot find such a distinctive factor apart from the religious system, for all the Indian communities in East Africa were historically exposed to the same environmental conditions. It is for this reason that we have to resort to the religious ideation of the community, for this was the only structural component which differed radically from the corresponding element in the rest of the Indian immigrant groups.

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More crucial, and less easy to answer in straightforward terms, is the question as to the manner in which the religious and ethical doctrines of the period accelerated the growth of the particular ethos we are considering here. Now we have already noted that the dualism inherent in the attitude towards the world in Ismailism seems at first sight to be irreconcilable with if not contradictory to the whole - hearted and vigorous pursuit of self-betterment in secular affairs in the later period. Closer examination, however, leads to a modification of this initial impression. To begin with, we have seen that the enormous tension produced by the conflict between what were seen as the destructive forces of the world, inimical to the welfare of the soul on one hand, and the personal striving for spiritual happiness on the other, was resolved through the motto of active participation with inward detachment. Thus this spiritual tension and restlessness proved to be a dynamic factor in the social evolution of the community. In addition to this, the dualism characterizing Ismaili thought in this period helped to bring about a psychological state which was favourable or conducive to the flowering of the

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secular outlook. That this growth was rapid and vigorous is a fact which owes itself to the supremacy of the Imam in the community, and will be discussed more fully in the next chapter. Moreover, the very fact that there was a dualism here meant that the later development already had its roots in the ethical orientation of the earlier period. In the qualified acceptance of the world in the incipient phase already lay a potential for the development of a more positive and vigorous adoption of the ideal of secular progress.

Furthermore, not only does the seeming contradiction between the earlier and later attitudes prove itself non-existent on close examination, but, even on the surface, the conflict between the two standpoints is not so sharp or extreme as one might suspect. As Weber noted, "the supposed conflict between other-worldliness, asceticism, and ecclesiastic piety on the one side, and participation in capitalistic acquisition on the other, might actually turn out to be an intimate relationship."[35] Even more significant is his observation that there are instances "where an extraordinary capitalistic business sense is combined in the same persons and

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groups with the most intensive forms of a piety which penetrates and dominates their whole lives."[36] In the case of the Ismailis, we find a strikingly similar tendency for intense religious ardour and a hard-headed, "down-to-earth" attitude in worldly matters, to exist alongside each other. And as to the question of how the pursuit of secular progress sprang out of the earlier mood, which was marked by a grim austerity in its aversion to excessive attachment to the world, the answer, as we have seen, is to be found in a process working in two different directions. First of all, since the earlier attitude towards the world was dualistic in that it was compounded of an outward acceptance of the world and an inner state of aloofness from it, the rudiments of a more vigorous and decided acceptance of the secular order were already present at this formative stage. For even at this period one can find in the ideation of the community a conspicuous willingness to enter into a transaction with the material world. Over and above this, one can detect another route through which the latter attitude came into being not only as a sequel but as an outcome of the earlier orientation. For, by virtue of worldly life being seen as the testing-ground for the demonstration of spiritual mastery over

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it, participation in worldly activity thus became an inescapable necessity. In this sense, while the temptations of worldly indulgence were the enemy against which the believer had to contend, worldly life in itself formed the battle-ground on which the war was to be fought. Moreover, a "correct" attitude to worldly life, consisting in its tampered and sober acceptance, counter-balanced by a posture of spiritual aloofness, was a potent ally in the fight against its dark and untamed forces.

While we are discussing the role of the intense religiosity of the early period in shaping the latter-day attitude of whole-hearted acceptance of worldly life, it is necessary to consider at greater length the precise manner in which the former served as a vital stimulus to the latter. The most important way in which the ethical doctrines that we have described provided an incentive for vigorous pursuit of material progress was by promoting a psychological temper which created a prediliction for such activity. In this spirit of tense confrontation with the material world and in the resulting mood of spiritual restlessness, lay a most powerful drive towards persistent, even feverish, activity in the world.

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Our attempt to locate in the ethical teachings of Ismailism at this period, specific motifs which supported the tireless pursuit of material prosperity, is parallel to Weber's search for similar motifs in Protestant ethical teachings. What Weber was trying to ascertain, in his own words, was "whether and at what points certain 'elective affinities' are discernible between particular types of religious belief and the ethics of work-a-day life. By virtue of such affinities the religious movements have influenced the development of material culture, and (an analysis of these affinities) will clarify as far as possible the manner and the general direction (of that influence) .....

We are interested in ascertaining those psychological impulses which originated in religious belief and the practice of religion, gave direction to the individuals everyday way of life and prompted him to adhere to it."[37]

Thus it is clear that the very nature of Ismaili ideation, with the rigorous austerity of its ethical system, generated precisely such "psychological impulses" which drove the individual follower into a relentless search for material success. At the same

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time, the most distinctive feature of this indefatigable zeal for activity was the planned and systematic, in other words, the "rational" character of this pursuit. Again as Weber noted in the case of Protestantism, the idea that a spirit of asceticism should permeate the believer's life "meant a rational planning of the whole of one's life in accordance with God's will."[38] What is even more significant to note is that this idea had an other-worldly reference to begin with. It impelled the believer to undertake "the rationalization of conduct within the world, but for the sake of the world beyond ..."[39] With the passage of time, this conception, hitherto confined to the religious ideation came to be concretely embodied in economic activity: "Now it strode into the market-place of life, slammed the door of the monastery behind it, and undertook to penetrate just that daily routine of life with its methodicalness, to fashion it into a life in the world, but neither of nor for this world."[40] A development roughly parallel to this can be seen in the case of the Ismailis.

This brings us to another important element in the relationship between the religious ethics and the secular enterprise of the Ismailis. The rationalization

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and systematization of both the life-style of the community as well as its institutions (in other words, of the value-system of the community as well as its organization), was accompanied by a corresponding "rationalization" of the religious ideas of the community. A detailed examination of this process in the religious sphere of the community would leave one in no doubt regarding the considerable influence it must have exerted on the developments in the social sphere. In short, the "rational" and "systematic" character of the ethics enjoined upon the individual Ismaili had the effect of weakening the traditionalism, and of obliterating the vestiges of superstitious (or, in Weber's terminology, "magical") elements in the faith. As Weber noted, "magical" notions and practices generally tend to have a markedly anti-rational and regressive effect on social evolution. In the case of the Ismailis, the gradual erosion of the more "superstitious" ingredients of the belief-system, and the related systematization of the religious ideas, rendered the faith less incompatible with the requirements of a "modern" way of life. It thus helped to create a condition which was favourable to the development of a "rationalized"

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approach to material life. Over and above this, the high degree of emphasis attached to "action" (ʿamal) in the religious ideation of the period, encouraged active and assiduous effort in the material sphere of the community. Thus we can see here a distinct correlation and affinity between specific elements in the religious ideation of the community, and the characteristic developments in its secular sphere. These arguments can be elucidated by referring to the actual teachings of the period, embodied in the farmāns of the Imam.

To begin with, it may be noted that the overwhelming importance ascribed to virtuous actions (ʿamal) in Ismailism was a logical sequel to the "inner-worldly asceticism" of its outlook on life. The aspiring believer was constantly anxious to ascertain whether the spiritual element that Ismailism demanded of him had effectively penetrated his everyday dealings. He was also anxious to make sure whether his worldly affairs were marked by the balance and sobriety that his religion required of him. But this could be proved only through concrete practical activity. Thus good ʿamal constituted not only a supreme duty but also a measuring-rod with the aid of which he could gauge the quality of his spiritual life. The importance attached to actions as the criteria of the ethical

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principles of the faith was associated with the conception that man had within him both "bestial" as well as "angelic" forces ranged against each other. If the believer succumbed to the former, he was bound to fall into an abyss wherein the forces of chaos and destruction reigned supreme. If, on the other hand, he was able to promote the "angelic" side of his nature and to abide by its dictates, he was in a position to seize an opportunity to rise to a lofty realm of the spirit. And the element in life which determines whether an individual is going to annihilate his humanity or crown it with divinity, is his actions. Thus the importance of ʿamal is so paramount in Ismaili theology as to over-shadow all other issues.

Another noteworthy aspect of the Ismaili ideas concerning ʿamal is the importance laid on right conditioning of the total personality. This theme recurs several times in the farmāns in the period under consideration. Human personality is viewed here as subject to being moulded in two opposite directions. Sheer force of habit can cause a negative tendency to be engrained in the personality, so that the individual constantly acts in contravention of his better judgement. Such a person thus jeopardises his own spiritual welfare by smothering his potential

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for developing a truly ethical life. In other words he accumulates, over the years, a perverse sense of right and wrong. By the same token, one can, again through the force of habit and through sheer self-discipline, engender in oneself a built-in propensity to act aright. It would be extremely difficult for such a man, not to say impossible, to act in contravention of his ethical principles since he would have to go out of his way in order to do wrong, so to speak. Thus actions pleasing in the sight of God would come "naturally" to him - in other words it would be in accordance with his natural bent to act aright. The Imam tried to vivify this idea by using the analogy of the man systematically training himself to excel in a particular sport.[42] While in the beginning such a man may find it difficult to make a headway, he gradually accumulates strength over the years, provided he is determined, regular and persistent in his training. In the same way the mu'min is enjoined to develop spiritual strength by subjecting himself to a systematic habit of performing virtuous deeds, until "goodness" and consideration for others flows from him with the fluency and spontaneity of an instinctive response. The importance attached to planned and systematic effort as a means of attaining

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spiritual perfection and purity turned out to be crucial, and it is not surprising, therefore, that when organization of the community began to expand at an ever-faster pace, and as the Ismailis applied themselves to the task of launching new institutions for secular purposes, this emphasis on methodical effort in the service of specific goals came to be extended into the social sphere of the community. As Weber observed, the development of economic rationalism is determined "by the ability and disposition of men to adopt certain types of practical rational conduct. When these types have been obstructed by spiritual obstacles, the development of rational economic conduct has also met serious inner resistance."[42]

One specific department of his life where the believer was especially enjoined to govern his behaviour according to rigorous ethical standards lay in his economic affairs. The necessity of observing strict business ethics is insistently stressed time and again in the farmāns. The strong importance attached to this requirement is obvious in view of the fact that commercial enterprise was the nerve-centre of the community's growing prosperity. While legitimate profit-making was enthusiastically

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condoned, fradulent or unethical profiteering was vehemently condemned. Hence honesty and integrity in business were considered prime virtues and essential conditions of success in material as well as spiritual life. The Imam pointed out that it was only in total and unflinching devotion to the ethic of honesty in his daily life that the Ismaili exemplified the true merit of his faith. It was from the concrete outcome of his daily activity that his spiritual state could be deduced. Hence the members of the community were constantly urged to behave in an exemplary fashion. When it is remembered that the Ismailis are not a proselytizing group, the importance of this idea becomes self-evident. For this was the only way in which the aspiring believer could realize the benefits of his faith, and the only measuring-rod by which he could assure himself of his conformity to its demands upon his personality.

Apart from this principle of letting ethical ideals penetrate and thus transform his conduct in everyday business-affairs, the believer was also obliged to face the implications of a rational and sober outlook on life on other departments of his life.

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The essence of this systematization of social life consisted in the belief that one's life should not be aimless, that one's energies ought not be frittered away in idle or frivolous pursuits, that all the drive and will-power one could muster ought to be channeled into seeking definite and "constructive" goals. It is this idea that formed the quintessence of the process we can best call "modernization", which we shall discuss further on. The farmāns of the Aga Khan III offer valuable insight into the ideas signalling this process. For example, sports (and exercise for the body) were passionately recommended, but the traditional mode of spending leisure-time based on a slow and inactive tempo, was severely criticized. Again, sociability and friendliness were considered cardinal virtues, and recreational activity was approved, but "idle gossip" was condemned. It is for the same reason and with economy in mind, that gambling was prohibited. Finally, the Imam always frowned on begging, and under his strict orders, charitable help was limited to those who were utterly incapable of earning their own living, such as invalids or widows. In this way, every possible temptation for laxity in worldly calling was eliminated, and instead, a vigorous spiritual incentive was

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provided for advancement in the world through assiduous devotion to duty and work.

Lastly, it is appropriate to note another important aspect of the principle of rationality that we have been discussing here. As we mentioned earlier, a central strand in Weber's thesis (and one that is crucial for understanding his over-all argument) is that the rationalization of religious ideas, especially that form of it which acts as a leverage on the social order, leads directly away from magical practices. The vestiges of magical elements, he observed, were to be found wherever there was excessive ritualism or "distribution of grace", or wherever there was a tendency to induce hysterical and transient moods of ecstasy giving rise to cultic orgies, as in some forms of mysticism. Now it is interesting to note that in the Ismaili community, the Imam's policy was to eliminate all the relics of magical practices inherited from its ethnic background. Methods of treating disease which were tantamount to "spiritual healing" were condemned. Visits to shrines were prohibited. Similar tendencies to resort to magical devices or artefacts in times of adversity were gradually curtailed.

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Magical practices on the whole were conbated fiercely in the Imam's motto, "Fight Superstition". Moreover, as time went by, the religious life was required to be "contained" within definite limits. Excessive pre-occupation with religious pursuits, to the detriment of secular welfare, was strongly disapproved. And it was always ensured that the times of prayers and religious ceremonies did not overlap with normal working hours. Similarly, the Imam's policy regarding religious education in schools was to allocate to it only the minimum necessary time, so that full attention could be given to the secular subjects.

We now turn to an important element in Weber's thesis that can constitute a potential challenge to our conclusions regarding the relationship between the secular endeavours of the Ismailis and their religious ideation. As we noted earlier, Weber classified the routes to salvation that different religious systems recommended, into two broad categories — that of asceticism on one hand, and contemplative mysticism on the other. The two attitudes were for him not only distinct but

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antithetic. Now, as we have already seen, there was a marked element of mysticism in Ismailism, in the phase we are considering. The immediate source of this mystical component, of course, was the gīnān-literature, which, as we noted in Chapter II, is characterized by an ardent and over-riding mystical temper. Again, the Aga Khan III's personal view of Islam was decidedly mystical. Perhaps this was partly due to his earlier training and to the influence of his mother, who was noted for her deep religious piety. "I have, in something near ecstasy," he says in his autobiography, "heard her read perhaps some verses by Roumi or Hafiz, with their exquisite analogies between the beatific vision of the Divine and the temporal beauty and colours of flowers, the music and the magic of the night, and the transient splendours of the Persian dawn".[43] This keen poetic sensibility to mystical experience was also reflected in his farmāns. In itself, the emphasis placed on mystical experience need not, by any inherent logic, lead to a negation of worldly activity. But since we have singled out certain constellations of ideas in Ismailism and seen that they correspond to what Weber called the spirit of

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"inner worldly asceticism", and since we have discussed the effects of these ideas on the social life of the community on the basis of Weber's general argument, it may be asked how the presence in Ismailism of that quest for mystical experience, which Weber considered to be hostile to worldly activity could be reconciled with the importance attached to the world in the same faith. Does not the simultaneous existence of elements which Weber considered mutually contradictory leave us with little or no justification for considering the influence of Ismaili religious ideation as the social life of the community along his line of argument? Our position is that such an impasse does not arise. This assertion can be supported by two considerations, one bearing upon Weber's notion of mysticism and its influence upon practical life, the other associated with the very nature of Ismaili mysticism. Needless to say, the two considerations are but two facets of a single point of view which helps us to meet this particular objection.

Now in regard to Weber's argument, it is important first of all to bear in mind that, as is generally known, his conceptual scheme consisted of

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"ideal types". Thus the contemplative mystic, who, according to him, conceived of salvation in a manner that led him directly away from rational worldly activity was the extreme type. The notion of salvation held by this extreme or "pure" type of contemplative mystic "requires that he lives on berries in the woods, which are not always available, or on alms."[44] Now not only is this attitude irreconciliably remote from contemporary Ismaili thought—it is in fact something that modern Ismailism has persistently denounced —but it is also contrary, as is well known, to the actual state of affairs in many mystical schools. Indeed, in almost all religions, one can find a whole range of varying degrees of acceptance and withdrawal of the world in practice, even within those groups wemay appropriately call "mystics". Moreover, even when the disparity between the "ideal" and the "actual" in this particular context is borne in mind, there is an additional reason why the mystical component in Ismailism did not counteract a spirit of active and eager acceptance of the world. And this is to be found chiefly in the fact that there were certain elements in Ismaili mysticism, certain important nuances in the world-view embodied in it, which

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rendered it essentially different from the type of "contemplative mysticism" Weber had in mind. This is a substantial factor, and as such deserves detailed consideration.

Apart from the differences in the techniques of attaining mystical experience in different systems, and apart from the important differences in the organization of various groups which advocate mystical doctrines, there is a certain sense in which one can speak of differences in the inner momentum of such forms of religiosity. The central dynamic of a mystical faith, broadly speaking, may be said to consist in a notion of either active striving or passive resignation. No doubt, in both types of mystical faith, the foremost emphasis is always on the experience of direct contact with the divine. But the notions regarding the psychological temperament believed to pave the way towards such an experience may differ radically in these two broad categories of mystical philosophy. In Ismailism, the chief dynamic in its mystical ideation, in the period we are considering, was provided by the notion of an upward journey or of a ceaseless movement

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towards greater spiritual perfection. Such a process was believed to be ceaseless in that the "ascent" of the spirit was considered to take place in "infinity", or in a realm devoid of boundaries or limits. The believer was thus discouraged from fixing his aims onto any particular experience of spiritual ecstasy, after securing which he might decide that the final "goal" had at least been reached, and that there was nothing more to strive for. Moreover, the mystical conception of "paradise" in the faith was closely associated with this idea, and had important bearings on it. In short, "paradise" was believed to consist in the development or fulfilment of the "angelic" element in man. In such a development, lay the potential transformation of man from what he is, into a being of a more refined nature. Man's chief goal was believed to consist in reaching the state of angels, and, indeed, in rising even beyond this height. Moreover "paradise" denotes a state of inner fulfilment, which one could acquire in <u>this</u> life.

Thus, in the mystical ideation in Ismailism, we find a temperament which had a strong affinity with the spirit that impelled its followers in their social life. The notion of a relentless effort and

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struggle with a view to attaining ever-increasing perfection was common to both spheres. Moreover, certain doctrinal elements prevented the mysticism in the faith from breeding an attitude of escapism. For one thing, the positive assessment of the rational faculty (reason was hailed as one of the foundations of the faith) checked the doctrines from gravitating towards excessive emotionalism. Moreover, the mystical strand in the faith was closely linked with the requirement that the believer should constantly strive to perfect his actions or ʿamal. Mystical experience and practical action were considered as two facets of a single, over-all process. Though there was a marked emphasis on ʿishq (love) - which was celebrated with an intense poetic sentiment - and on ibādaṭ (prayer), both were considered null and void in the absence of virtuous ʿamal. The following extract from a letter from the Aga Khan III vividly illustrates the close association of ibādaṭ and ʿamal in Ismaili thought:

"Now Islam has many forms of prayers. Ismailis in prayer go to a higher and higher spiritual life till the supreme spiritual life reached immediately after death, by union, as soon as the day comes when the

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Real calls the apparent to itself. But Islam first and Ismailism much more so insists on action; without action faith is useless; without action prayer becomes pride. With entire absorption in work during the day and then higher prayers at night, a new life may come, provided the two occupations are total."[45] The search for an integration of mystical experience (attained chiefly through prayer) with worldly activity, and the anxious attempt to strike a balance between the two features, could not have been more vividly enunciated. The following extract from a press interview given by the Aga Khan III clearly brings out his distrust of spiritual pursuits carried out in isolation from the world:

"No, I have no liking for hermits and other solitaries who refuse all responsibilities. They may live in a town as likely as in a desert, and their avowed purpose may be to lead holy lives; but, in fact, if they have ecstasies, they are the ecstasies of self-indulgence. My concern is not with them.

Those who accept the normal responsibilities of life, with all the chances of minor annoyance and utter catastrophe, may know many small griefs and much great sorrow .... but, if they are at one with

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God and have lived manfully, behind the mask of sorrow, bitter though it may be, their souls will be at peace."[46]

The Imam's detestation of all positions of retreat from the world is most obvious here. What is less obvious, but even more significant, is that this attitude was not in opposition to but in accord with the deep mysticism which was so prominent a feature of his teachings to his followers.

In tracing the intrinsic rigorism of the ethical system in Ismailism in the early east African phase, and in assessing its influence in the secular domain of the community, we have been dealing with an essentially indirect form of this influence. In other words, what we have discussed so far is the function served by the religious ideation in the rapidly changing organization of the society. It is important to bear in mind that in as much as the function of specific religious ideas in the society was not overly visible, it was latent in nature. This, of course, is another way of saying that the potential for vigorous worldly activity in the peculiar character of the "inner-worldly asceticism" of the early period is a sociological fact and not a consciously intended provision in the religious thought

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of the period. However, as time went by, the incipient momentum towards vigorous worldly activity, already present in the stringent religiosity of the early period, began to unfold into a more straightforward, energetic and almost dramatic burst of activity. Correspondingly, the religious sanction for worldly advancement, which was inherent in the ideation of the early period, also became more pronounced and straightforward. What was originally an unconscious link now became a deliberately and consciously cultivated partnership. Thus what we have here is nothing short of a radical shift from a latent functional relationship, to a manifest one. This does not mean that in the earlier period worldly activity was spurned. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The Aga Khan III's ardent support for social upliftment was a most striking aspect of his character, just as his insistent wish that his followers should attain a higher standard of living was a prominent feature of his farmāns to the community. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the attitude towards the world at this stage was marked by a rigorous austerity of outlook, a deep humility and contriteness, coupled with an urge to attain mastery over the

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vagaries of the world, appropriate to the spiritual elite that the Ismailis saw themselves as. Thus, the predominant mood in the religious temperament of this period consisted of a deep spiritual restlessness. For the core of the world-view at this stage consisted of a harrowing dualism stemming from the simultaneous acts of acceptance and rejection of the world. In this dualism, as we have seen, lay a fertile potential for determined and vigorous pursuit of worldly ends. But while this potential was recognized, and its development encouraged — and one must not underestimate the extent to which there was a deliberate and definite philosophy of worldly betterment even at this stage — it was restricted, in as much as it was modified by a vigorous insistence on inner detachment. Later, however, this deep-lying tension was eradicated through a whole-hearted and vigorous acceptance of the world. The dualism thus gave way to an unmistakably single-minded attitude. While previously there had been an intense but uneasy alliance between the religious ideation and the secular interests of the community, now its place was taken by an overt and whole-hearted marriage of the two elements.

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In considering the foremost phase of East African Ismailism, we found it necessary to investigate how the presence of two apparently opposed elements in the ideational system could be explained. We also saw that in the ultimate analysis the two elements in question were much less inherently antithetic than they seemed to be on the surface. Now, however, we have the reconciliation provided to us in a most explicit form in the farmāns themselves. In the farmāns dating roughly from 1911 onwards, we find a single-minded devotion to worldly vocation, and a whole-hearted acceptance of all "permissible" forms of worldly pleasure. The intensity and introspective tension of the early period has now disappeared. What we find in its place is a straightforward and express doctrine treating religion and worldly life as complementary to one another, and as necessary ingredients for completeness, both at the individual as well as the social level. Similarly, in place of the earlier dualism in the assessment of the world, we find a synthesis of the spiritual and the temporal. There are repeated warnings against undue emphasis on one element at the expense of the other. The route to fulfilment is believed to lie in the

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synthesis, not separation, of the two aspects. We have already noted the Aga Khan III's avowed aversion to eremitic or ascetic practices. The following message to one of his followers who seems to have sought his approval for retiring from active life throws further light on his strong opposition to such retreat from the world:

"According to Islam one is not allowed to escape one's daily responsibilities of life, its hardships, distractions, material pressures. To run away into seclusion is running away from the battle and not facing it.

According to our holy laws, only cowards live in a world of imagination. It is a great sin to run away from the daily troubles of the world instead of doing our humble work and carrying on worldly activities with other human beings. To enter a convent, or a monastery, or an ashram is against Islam and so against Ismailism. It is absolutely opposed to Islam because it is, fundamentally, running away from life, which is human. Everybody has his own troubles and his struggle in life, and yet must keep spiritual purity of heart. The Prophets and all Imams lived active, political, social lives."[47]

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Up to this stage, we have been examining the religious and value system of the Ismailis in its bearing upon social life, at a primarily abstract plane. For in accordance with the analytic method adopted in this study, what we have done is to distil from the sum-total of organizational developments discussed in Chapter IV, the underlying attitude which was common to all these developments and furnished the essential impetus to carry them out. We called this basic attitude "the spirit of secular progress". Concretely, this spirit became manifest in the increasingly strong emphasis on the element of "rationality" in everyday life, in the rapid extension of organizational institutions, and in that alteration in life-style or values which we have, for lack of a more comprehensive term, called "modernization". The practical developments reflecting and embodying this change in outlook scarcely fell short of a total over-haul in the organization, manner of living, and in the norms and values determining the every-day life of the Ismailis. In the following section of this chapter, we shall try to describe the actual changes in the value-system that came about as a result of the

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emergence of the new ethos. The organizational changes have already been related in Chapter IV. Accordingly, in the present chapter we shall direct our attention to the values underlying these changes. In so doing, it will be necessary to refer again to some of the organizational aspects of the community which have already been discussed in Chapter IV. However, at the present stage what we are concerned with is not the actual institutions in the community, nor with the historical events connected with the appearance of these institutions, but with the values and attitudes which created a favourable climate for the emergence of these institutions, and helped to determine the manner in which they were going to function.

Before we go on to discuss these concrete changes embodying modernization in the community, it is helpful to note the over-all mood pervading the farmāns of the period under consideration (i.e. from 1911 onwards). The dominant note, characteristically enough, consisted in a mood of forging ahead, of undertaking adventurous innovations, making break-throughs and exploring new pathways. In his auto-biography, the Aga Khan III described the rise of Islam as a "rapid and brilliant new flowering of

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humanity's capacity and desire for adventure in the realm of both spirit and intellect."[48] This description of the rise of the Islamic faith tells us as much about Ismailism as it does about the Aga Khan's interpretation of Islam. For the outlook underlining this conception of Islam also pervaded the Aga Khan's teachings to his own community. And the social affairs of the community constituted a more concrete but by no means less important sphere in which an unprecedented opportunity for the exercise of this "capacity and desire for adventure" presented itself. "Fear none but God" was a principle the Imam frequently tried to inculcate into the community, with its implication of undaunted readiness to move forward in new directions. In the same spirit, the community was encouraged to experiment with novel organizations or novel ways of life with a view to keeping abreast of changing circumstances. In the farmāns dealing with spiritual thtmes, the dominant emphasis was on cheerfulness and sober joviality - "the mu'min is always in paradise" - and a sense of youthful animation - "the mu'min's heart is always young, it never ages".[48] Thus, the attitude to life displayed here is marked by positive enthusiasm and a gesture of energetic out-reaching. In accordance

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with this spirit, traditional or historical ideas were given a new interpretation and thus invested with a new significance. A vivid example can be found in the following definition of the ideal fidai, in an Ismaili periodical. The fidai, according to the writer, "works not only for himself but for the community as a whole. His life is one of dedication. For the glory of the faith and the fountainhead of all inspiration and knowledge, the Imam, he would immolate SELF and build on its ashes the edifice of COMMUNAL PROGRESS. With him to think is to act, but in a good cause."[50]

Needless to say, this is a far cry from the meaning the term fidai had come to stand for during Hasan bin Sabah's reign at Alamūt.[51] Another noteworthy example of this process of re-interpretation can be found in the Imam's version of the historical event of Ḥusayn's martyrdom. In a characteristic farmān to his followers, the Imam said that the chief lesson of the event at Kerbela was to be found in its positive implications, in as much as the martyrdom symbolized a brave defence of certain principles and ideals. In other words, to the Imam, the martyrdom of Ḥusayn stood for a spirit of forward-looking

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self-sacrifice, and this was its chief importance for succeeding generations.[52] Indeed, a relentless pursuit of communal discipline constituted, according to the Imam, a contemporary equivalent of the jihād. Again, it is interesting to note that on more than one occasion, the Imam urged the "missionaries" in the community to devote as much attention, in their preaching, to secular matters of importance, such as female education, as to religious topics.[53]

Bearing in mind this over-all transformation in the ethos of the community — a process in which the energetic and authoritative leadership of the Aga Khan III played a crucial role — we may now turn to specific changes in the community's value-system in the various departments of its social life. One might begin with a consideration of the economic sphere. The transformation in the economic affairs of the community was reflected both at the level of collective ventures of the kind described in Chapter IV, and in the individual Ismaili's attitude towards his vocation. In the latter case, of course, it is further necessary to bear in mind that we are here studying the normative order intended to govern the conduct of the community-members, and not their

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actual conduct, which can be ascertained only on the basis of empirical data. No doubt, the powerful appeal of the Imam's farmāns to the community transformed the lives of individual followers in important respects. But the effects of the Imam's leadership are more readily observable in matters such as dress and language, than in more intangible issues such as the attitudes and values governing the daily lives of the followers.

The economic field was one field where the re-orientation of the community's value-system was particularly striking. This re-orientation reflected the growth of a positive relationship with the world-order. In the ultimate analysis it was, of course, a sequel to the tense religious fervour of the earlier period, and was less of a gesture of turning away from the latter, than a culmination of it. Nevertheless, the eventual outcome showed a strong contrast to its antecedent, in that the religious temper in the later phase was free from the tension so pronounced in the earlier period. Nowhere else is this change so explicitely and so tellingly summarized as in the following farmān of the Aga Khan III:

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"According to our faith, one of the greatest services you can render to the cause of our religion is to make your worldly affairs a success."[54]

This farmān sums up the attitude we have described as "the spirit of secular progress". Being typically representative of the many farmāns made by the Imam on this point, and also the most comprehensive of them all, it leaves no doubt as to the single-minded and positive espousal of worldly activity so characteristic of contemporary Ismaili thought. What is most important to note in this connection is that this gesture of enthusiastic acceptance of the world is supported by a religious conception. Thus the idea that worldly life deserves one's full attention was fostered and sanctioned by the religious ethos of the community. It was this fact of its being grounded in the religious ideation that was responsible for the peculiar strength of the new spirit of secular upliftment in the community. Weber was impressed by a similar trait in early Protestantism, and he noted that the sense of duty which drove the believer to labour indefatigably in his occupation had a strong ethical impulse behind it: "It is an obligation which the individual is supposed to feel

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and does feel towards the content of his occupational activity, no matter in what it consists."[55] The special character of this sense of calling was that "the infraction of its rules is treated not as foolishness but as forgetfulness of duty. That is the essence of the matter. It is not mere business astuteness, that sort of thing is common enough, it is an ethos. This is the quality which interests us."[56] It is this attitude that is conveyed in the commonplace expression, "Anything that is worth doing at all is worth doing well". But as a critic of Weber observed, this proverbial sentence has today come to be "devoid of all concern with a higher, trandcendental purpose".[57] In the case of the Ismailis such a "higher, transcendental" frame of reference for worldly activity has not disappeared entirely even up to date. But its historical role was essentially similar to the corresponding element in Protestant thought.

Since the Ismaili community in East Africa was predominantly composed of traders, it was in the commercial field that the implicationsof the new outlook were most pronounced. Thus the Imam's advice to his followers was to be busy with their work during

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the day and with the "prayer of mi'rāj " during the night.[58] The two activities were to be pursued not in spite of each other but along with each other — and indeed, in an important sense, with a view to reinforcing each other. "Concentrate on commerce business emigration and improve worldly position" — urged the Imam in a telegraphic message to his followers.[59] This sums up the policy of the community regarding commercial enterprise, and the spirit which animated this policy. The new effort was directed chiefly in two directions — achieving greater "rationality" in economic enterprise, and providing a more organized and collective basis to it, on a scale which embraced the bulk of the community. In both these developments, the process of "modernization", and the steady departure from traditional modes of carrying out business, was most evident.

The transformation of the community from the stage where the bulk of its members were owners of small-scale and scattered retail concerns to a prospering business-community involved radical adjustments in outlook. While in Chapter IV we

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discussed at some length the economic organization of the community, especially in the period following the last world-war, here we are concerned with transformation of the values constituting the general economic outlook of the community, which underlined and sustained the actual commercial institutions. As part of a process of economic education, the Imam encouraged his followers to develop that characteristic alacrity, wariness, and vigilance that is so indispensable in the psychological equipment of the successful businessman. Indeed, one finds numerous farmāns bearing witness to the Imam's effort to encourage among his followers that characteristic sense of "hard-headedness" so typical of the astute businessman. Furthermore, the Aga Khan was only too aware that the traditional hold of family and kinship ties in the community could very well turn out to be a major obstacle in the development of economic enterprise along bureaucratic lines. To counteract this danger, the members of the community were urged to learn and adopt the technique of managing their businesses in accordance with modern economic know-how and not on the haphazard lines to which they were accustomed through long tradition and practice. Thus proper methods of book-keeping and auditing, and

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scrupulous compliance with the rules of systematic management were recommended with a view to ensuring continued growth of the businesses run by individual families. In this way, an over-all process of economic education of the community was set into motion. At the same time, the traditional social and religious ties existing among the members of the community were fully exploited and re-channelled into massive collective endeavours of the kind described in Chapter IV. These finance corporations were highly instrumental in furthering the economic education of the community, and in initiating its members into modern methods of economic enterprise. In turn, this process of economic learning, and of increasing familiarity with the principles of bureaucracy, was reflected in the management of the corporations and in the establishment of new ventures demanding sophisticated economic know-how. It is also significant to note that while these institutions were an embodiment of the principle of organizing the community as a miniature "welfare state", the Imam made sure they were run on a basis of self-help, and that they did not get converted into charitable bodies. Hence, the goal at which the community leaders were aiming, in accordance with the wishes of the Imam,

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was an interlocking of individual enterprise with joint, large-scale ventures on a communal basis, and the maintenance of an ideal balance between the principle of extending welfare benefits within the community, and the policy of inculcating strict business acumen in its members.

The latter policy was closely associated with another ingredient in the over-all process of economic rationalization — the principle of strict economy in everyday life. This is so marked a feature of the farmāns of both the Imams, that it deserves important consideration. Moreover, it is also indirectly related to the religious temper of the earlier period (i.e. with the "inner worldly asceticism" of the ethical system). For in view of the austere temper which the Ismaili was expected to cultivate, especially in relation to his worldly activities, nothing could appear more undesirable than vain-glorious display of wealth. On the other hand, since legitimate acquisition of wealth was considered not only permissible but almost obligatory, simplicity in private life was admired as a reflection of spiritual sobriety, signifying the attitude of accepting the world without being carried away by it.

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By a curious paradox, however, once the ethic of positive acceptance of the world became more and more consciously emphasized, and once the tension which had originally been introduced by the dualistic outlook towards the world had disappeared, the principle of rigorous economy in one's daily life came to be pursued for its own sake. At this stage, in fact, it became a deliberate instrument in attaining greater economic prosperity. Hence, it was a striking reflection of economic rationalization, and of the drive in the community for acquisition and success. Especially during the war years, the Imam's constant encouragement to his followers to add to their savings and to invest them in the financial institutions of the community, was designed to consolidate their economic position: "Now that European War is over, everywhere postwar plans will be put into action and in order to withstand all competition and face difficulties with success it is of paramount importance that the strictest economy should be observed in all worldly expenditure ....."[60]
So ran many of the messages from the Imam over this period. The principle of economy was also advocated with a view to creating an austere and restrained style of life — a reminder of the severe intensity of

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the earlier period. Thus, the followers were asked to remember that "economy in daily life as part of religion is necessary, you must not squander money on gambling, betting on horses, unnecessary expensive clothes...."[61] It cannot be over-emphasized that the high importance attached to this idea was not merely a reflection of sound business sense; it signified an important development in the life-style of the followers, and hence, in their value-system. The traditional customs of organizing regular and lavish feasts, or of spending enormous amounts of money on ornaments and personal adornment, or on elaborate festivities (especially on occasions such as marriage), were vehemently criticized by the Imam. In common with most other Indian communities, there was a firmly entrenched custom among the Ismailis to celebrate marriages in lavish and grand style, accompanied by elaborate ceremonies and costly exchange of gifts. Hence the change in the life-style of the East African community was most radical and pronounced in this particular area. The Imam ordered the prevailing festivities to be eradicated one by one, and the followers were asked to spend "next to nothing" on occasions such as marriage, and to re-channel the money thus saved into "uplift on

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modern lines,"[62] i.e. into such causes as "emigration ... commercial and business training and .... general education."[63] The process of modernization, and the eclipse of traditional values governing the life-style of the community-members was thus demonstrated most clearly in this particular field.

Education was another department of community-life where the process of modernization was most pronounced. As we saw earlier, progress in building educational facilities and bringing them into line with modern theories and techniques, has been one of the most striking developments in the community in the past few decades. Here we are concerned only with the values and attitudes underlining this development. The lingering influence of a traditional mode of life was once again weakened by the "religious" support provided to secular education — "religious" in that the lead came from the Imam, and secondly, in that the education of children was considered not only a worthy accomplishment but a duty incumbent on all Ismaili parents. The following farmāns clearly illustrate the nature and degree of importance attached to this matter:

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"It is the duty of all jamats to impart worldly as well as religious education to their children. For girls as well, such education is necessary ... . Not a single follower of mine should be illiterate."[64]

And, on the same note:

"It is essential that both boys and girls should acquire education. The problem of education is so very serious and important that it is a question of life and death for a community or jamat."[65]

It is also interesting to note that the education imparted in the Ismaili schools (always named "Aga Khan" schools), was entirely secular in nature, and was organized on modern, Western lines. Though religious education was maintained alongside the secular studies, the time allocated to it was comparatively meagre. Moreover, the Imam's express policy was that religious education should in no way be allowed to interfere with normal studies, and since the time set aside for it was small, there was no question of it encroaching on secular studies, which thus received a larger share of attention.

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Lastly, it is interesting that the Imam saw the true nature of education as being, apart from a mental exercise, an adventurous promotion of the individual as well as communal spirit. This is in accordance with the spirit of "forward-movement" that pervaded his approach to other aspects of community-life. In the earlier phase of the consolidation of the community's position in East Africa, this conception of the role of education in the community was tied with the need for immigration into rural areas, and with the call for a spirit of adventure:

"Ismaili people have reached where they are now because of the spirit of adventure. Now it seems that only in the ignorant and illiterate you will find that spirit. The real object of education today is to improve the spirit of man and not his knowledge of facts and figures. That spirit must become stronger, and the urge to find full satisfaction in a large and distant country must be encouraged."[65]

No doubt, the role of education in the community is conceived in a radically different manner at the present time. This is because in the post-independence era, the present Aga Khan has shown an anxious desire that the community's education policy should be geared

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in accordance with the policies of the new governments, so that young Ismailis may find themselves equipped in precisely those areas where they are wanted and welcomed. Commercial prosperity and immigration are no longer the targets of community policy. But the historical transformation of ideas in these fields enables us to see not only the antecedents of the present developments in the community, but also the new set of values which stimulated and facilitated this transformation.

We might also briefly glance at some other areas of community life where there was a similar transformation of values and the life-style of the followers in everyday matters. A revealing example is to be found in the Aga Khan III's farmāns concerning health, diet, etc. These farmāns are most revealing in that they vividly illustrate an explicitely religious sanction behind these otherwise purely worldly issues. What more convincing evidence about the peculiar integration of religious ideas and social adjustment can be called for, than the following farmāns of the Aga Khan III:

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"Remember that according to our Ismailia faith, the body is the temple of God for it carries the soul that receives Divine Light. So great care of the body, its health and cleanliness are to guide you in later life ....."[66]

"In Islam, a Moslem should have a clean soul in a strong healthy body. We cannot order our bodies to be healthy and strong but can by constant attention, care, regular exercises and sports in our youth and early years of manhood go a long way to counteract the dangers and evils that surround us ..."[67]

"You must all remember the importance of a healthy soul and a healthy body. The healthy soul comes by a constant realization of the beauty of the Supreme Being. Your constant duty is the development of a healthy body which is the temple of God."[68]

The following farmān, though consisting of the same theme, touches on another problem that is responsible, in religious propositions in general, for the tension between a religious "explanation" of the world and the undeniable reality of pain and sorrow:

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".....Now I turn to a second very important subject, in some ways perhaps more important than education. As you all know very well, we are Muslims of the Imami Ismaili sect and both in Islam generally and particularly among Ismailis, the belief is that the only true masjid or house of God is the human body, in which the soul lives through its earthly period of discipline, joy, difficulties and sorrows. This body must be carefully looked after. Some illnesses and afflictions are quite natural and are trials through which we must all pass. But, unfortunately, among us I find that for one such natural illness or indisposition there are five or ten due to defective diet and due to habits going against the principles of health determined by nature."[69]

It may be pointed out that this farmān was made in India, where the standards of health in the community were probably poorer than those prevalent among the East African followers. Regardless of this, however, it is interesting to see how the Aga Khan tried to modify the attitude of pious acceptance of suffering that springs from Islamic belief and would presumably be, if anything, reinforced by the

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mystical element in Ismailism. It is quite probable that the Imam was aware of the danger of the fatalistic implications of religious belief and so deliberately tried to formulate a compromise between a religious (or mystical) interpretation of life, and a more practical, hard-headed approach enshrining the notion of individual responsibility:

"Rather than complaining about the sorrows and hardships that afflict you, you must accept them with joy. You must understand that it is only by patiently enduring the misfortunes and hardships which are part of your lot in life, that your spirit can be cleansed. But, your spirit does not benefit when it is your own carelessness that is responsible for the illnesses and hardships which you suffer. Man possesses the gift of reason, and using this gift, you must take full measures against those diseases that follow your own lack of care."[70]

This farmān is a typical example of the Aga Khan III's diplomacy in seeking to establish a compromise between worldly common-sense and religious idealism. His own thinking was marked by this peculiar

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partnership of a bold down-to-earth attitude and a fervent sense of religious piety, and this was not in the least surprising in view of his diverse roles and his multifarious interests. Within the community, the Aga Khan spoke much more in accepted theological language than he did elsewhere, but the reverberations of his own personal outlook on life and his variegated interests were constantly noticeable in developments in the lives of his own followers.

We might now examine some other important changes in the life-style of the community members, reflecting the same process of modernization. A most concrete, outward symbol of the modernizing movement was the dramatic, almost overnight adoption of western dress by the women members of the community in place of the Indian traditional costume. Although some farmāns on this note had been issued after the war, it was not until the "Evian Conference" took place at Cairo in 1952 that the change of dress was adopted as an important policy in the community. The reason advanced for this policy was that it was necessary for the Ismailis to turn their back finally and completely on the Indian way of life, and to adopt a life-style more

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in accord with both British and African aspirations. It was felt that the change in dress would act as a potent catalyst in accelerating a change of identity. No doubt, it is important to bear in mind that such ingredients of one's life-style as a distinctive mode of dressing may become part-and-parcel of the identity of an individual or a society. When it comes to play such a fundamental role in the projection of a society's image, it may become especially resistant to change, for by then it would have acquired an importance much greater than its own intrinsic significance. In short, it would have become not only a necessary ingredient in the identity of the group, but also a tangible symbol representing its distinctive personality. In this sense, it has a tendency to become the very embodiment of group-identity, and an outward, tangible proof of it. It is not surprising therefore that one often finds ethnic or national groups with such outward and definite objects marking them off from other people, clinging to such proofs with an intensity that to the outsider may appear grossly disproportionate. The real source of the extra-ordinary strength of the feelings attached to such apparently superficial traits is to be found in the fact that from being

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mere customs or habits, such traits pass through the stage of serving as useful concrete symbols of the values governing a society, and end up as being the very embodiment of these values. They also furnish a precious tool in the society's attempt to communicate with the world, to announce to other people its separate existence in its own right. Moreover, such a declaration is also self-addressed, in other words, it is a technique adopted by the people in question to interpret themselves to themselves, and, if these traits are discarded and new ones adopted in their place, what the people are doing in effect is re-interpreting themselves to themselves.

In the case of the Ismailis, the change in the women's mode of dressing served just such a symbolic function. To begin with, it was a total and determined break from Indian society. It would be safe to say, in fact, that the decision marked a final process in the community of turning its back once and for all on its Indian ancestry. It also marked its increasingly closer identification with the West. It is not surprising therefore that this conspicuous and dramatic gesture provoked strong criticism and resentment among members of some of the

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other Indian communities. To some of them, the Ismailis had become over-westernized; to some others, the women were clearly displaying a distasteful fall in moral standards.[71] Such resentment also points to the underlying meaning behind the decision of the Ismailis and the hostility it provoked among the other Indian communities. It was a culmination of a process that had been at work since a long time - a widening difference between the Ismailis and the other Indian communities, arising at least in part out of the Ismailis' repudiation of the Indian way of life, and the increasingly earnest adoption of "modern" secular values associated with the West.

A similar mechanism, and equally far-reaching in its symbolic significance, was the abolition of Gujrati from the curricula of all Ismaili schools. This was also one of the resolutions of the Evian Conference. English now became the sole language in these schools, and it was essentially a prestige language. Knowledge of English thus constituted a status-symbol. From now on, the disuse of Gujrati was only a matter of time. The present Aga Khan signalled its elimination when he urged his followers to adopt English as the language to be used not only in the schools, but also at home.[72]

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These outstanding changes were accompanied, as we have seen, by parallel changes on a smaller and less visible though by no means insignificant scale. The common denominator in these changes consisted of an influx of new values, which were ultimately derived from the Western secular ethos. And the area of activities affected by this transformation was truly broad, ranging from the most intimate and domestic matters to social relationships, education, etc. The replacement of traditional values by new Western values was visible even at the most ordinary level and in regard to essentials such as diet. The mode of cooking ceased to be exclusively Indian; principles of hygiène were propagated by community leaders; and the Imam actively encouraged freer and broader participation in sports (for which more and more clubs and facilities were set up), and such social and intellectual activities as debating, etc. The important aspect of these changes is not so much the new set of customs and activities in themselves (at any rate, to what extent these actually became established in practice can be ascertained only through field-research), but the appeal they had for the community, and the aura of prestige that was associated with those whose life-style incorporated these new ways. This is what is meant when we speak

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of them as values. While this term is more or less precisely defined in sociology, anthropology and allied disciplines and is, in fact, often employed as a concept, we may take a rather random example and note a broad definition proffered by one particular anthropologist. Firth defines value as "the preference quality assigned to an object", and notes the fact that it always "involves judgement on a preference scale, a grading". Moreover, "it implies primarily positive qualities, ideas of desirability or worth."[73] This definition is sufficiently apt and useful for our purpose. It is obvious that whether or not a society succeeds wholly in realizing certain ideals in actual practice, it is undeniable that all societies do have such ideals. These ideals are held up as worthy and desirable goals. The reason why a certain group cherishes particular ideals may or may not be expressed in religious terms. What is more, these ideals or objects may be personified in concrete objects, specific habits and customs, or definite modes of behaviour. It is with such ideals or, more strictly, values, with which we are concerned here. In the case of the Ismailis, the Western way of life embodied just such a set of values. In other

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words, it had a peculiar appeal as a status-symbol, and it appeared as eminently desirable to the community as a whole. No doubt, this sense of admiration was at least stimulated and augmented, if not wholly inculcated, by the Aga Khan III, who was manifestly convinced that the future of his community lay in the adoption of a pre-dominantly European way of life. Moreover, introduction of basically European values was evident, as we have seen, in diverse areas of the social life of the Ismailis, ranging from minute and unobtrusive aspects such as diet, rearing of children, etc., to such outrightly conspicuous matters as language, dress, etc. The following message of the Imam, demonstrating a paternal joy at the success of the community in this field, also makes the importance ascribed to this process within the community, unmistakably obvious:

"I am glad to say that between the year when I first came to Africa, 57 years ago, and today, there has been great advance amongst my beloved children. In those days you were a handful of Asiatics lost on the continent hoping only for protection from officials and from the local government. Now, you are a big organized community and thanks to the various

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Jubilees, you have a capital which no other community of your size has in the world. You are organized, your education is going up, you have accepted and adopted, like the Japanese, European conditions of life such as clothing, habits, etc."[74]

Lastly there remains for our consideration a particular focus of reforms in the community which was, once again, highly conspicuous, and to which the Aga Khan devoted a fair share of his attention. The role of women in his own community and in Islamic countries was a subject for which the Aga Khan had especially strong views and feelings. In his auto-biography, the Aga Khan said with manifest pride that "in my grandfather's and my father's time the Ismailis were far ahead of any other Muslim sect in the matter of the abolition of the strict veil, even in extremely conservative countries. I have absolutely abolished it; nowadays you will never find an Ismaili woman wearing the veil. Everywhere from the first I have encouraged girls' schools, even in regions where otherwise they were completely unknown".[75] The position of women was a topic about which the Aga Khan was particularly sensitive, and a complaint on the

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part of a more conservate member of the community to the effect that the reforms that were being carried out might lead to the "vices of Hollywood" entering the community, drew a fiery retort from the Aga Khan:

"This gentleman has talked of the vices of Hollywood coming amongst the young ladies of the Jamat. I hate the vices of Hollywood. But what about the worse vice of the slavery of women in purdah, burqah and senana where women are reduced to the moral insignificance of vegetables and physical wrecks, and diseases such as tuberculosis, etc. God does not consider anybody moral who is put in a cage or box and locked up. The only morality is of those who persist the temptation of evil and with honour carry their head high, having seen the attraction of the bad and chosen the good."[76]

One of the most important means through which the Aga Khan tried to promote the status of women in the community was education. Even a cursory survey of the farmāns on this point leaves one in no doubt that this cause was particularly dear to him. The most notable point of significance of the Imam's efforts to promote female education in his community lay in

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the fact that it was a radical break from the prevalent Indian as well as Muslim tradition. One can easily imagine that the idea of female education was not only alien but also repugnant to the community in as much as it was, owing to its ethnic ties, strongly attached to Indian culture. Similarly, female education was hardly a positive ideal in Muslim countries. As early as 1913, during a visit to Bombay, the Aga Khan was jubilant to see an exhibition of handiwork at an Ismaili girls' school, and this provoked a lengthy and impassioned farmān from him extolling and underlining the virtues of female education. The gist of the farmān, in his own words, was that "there should not be a single Ismaili girl who is not educated".[77] Several years later, the Aga Khan made a similarly passionate plea for female education at Zanzibar. Judging from the tone of the farmān, one may imagine that he left his followers in no doubt as to the seriousness with which he viewed the subject, and asserted firmly, "All the knowledge that exists in the world should be available to girls for them to master".[78] A year later, at Mombasa, the Imam touched on the same topic: "I do not wish to see Ismaili women dependent on their parents, husbands, or anyone else but God ....

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Give to the girls such education as would enable them to make their own living".[79] At the same place, but many years later, the Aga Khan was even more emphatic:

"Supposing a father had two children, a son and a daughter, and could afford to educate only one of them — if such parents were to seek my advice, I would recommend the daughter to be educated first. I should expect that the boy would be able to stand on his own feet anyway, and so it is the daughter who should have the priority. There is an additional reason for this — if the mother is educated, she will be able to teach her children. Whereas even if the father may be educated, he may be so involved in his business affairs as to unable to give his children the kind of attention an educated mother would be capable of.

"Girls should receive excellent education. Even more than men, women should have perfect faith and confidence. It is very important that women should cultivate spiritual strength. I have declared Ismaili women to be free and independent. If this had not been the case, your status would have been the same as that of other Muslim women who are shrouded in the

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veil, unable to walk the streets with self-assurance. But your Imam has brought you total freedom. The Ismailis are fifty years ahead of other Muslim communities. Even in the next twenty years the other Muslims will never be able to attain the independence that the Ismailis have already achieved."[80]

The farmāns quoted above illustrate the Aga Khan's concern for the education of women. Associated with this was an equally solicitous concern for their health — and of their children. Once again the process of "modernization" is obvious. In 1926, at Nairobi, the Imam recommended the formation of a committee of women conversant with the principles of child health, in every important town.[81] From then on this was a regular and prominent theme of his farmāns. An interesting fact to note here is that the jamātkhānā became the centre for dissemination of information of this kind. The partnership between the spiritual and the temporal could not be more striking. ("Do not think that the jamātkhānā is a place only for prayer - you ought to arrange lectures on child-welfare and related subjects in the jamātkhānā."[82])

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We may complete this examination of the process of modernization of the life-style of the East African Ismailis, by a brief look at the values governing the institution of marriage in the community. In some ways, the transformation of the very nature and organization of the marriage ceremony was so complete, as to stand comparison, in its thorough-going nature, with the changes of dress and language. It also marked an uncompromising break with Hindu tradition.

Marriage itself was, in the Imam's mind, something fundamentally in accord with the Islamic world-view as he interpreted it. A message sent to the community, "Prevent young people remaining unnaturally single", sums up this attitude. It was, however, in connection with this very institution that the Indian cultural traits among the Ismailis were most prominent. Marriage festivities were usually extremely protracted, lasting over several days, with ritual exchange of gifts sealing the new bonds between the families of the two parties, and accompanied by lavish feasts, payment of dowry, gifts of ornaments, etc. The Imam's main objective was to trim down the ceremony until only the bare essentials remained.

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The Aga Khan III fought a militant crusade against the lavish ceremonies and rites accompanying marriages. The following extract provides a good example:

"Spending on marriages is the worst of the Hindu systems that you have. Marriage, death and birth ceremonies must be drastically curtailed. See how they marry in North Africa, Egypt, Mecca —they are very simple marriage ceremonies."[83]

It is interesting to note that the community leaders felt so restless about the persistence of an essentially Hindu style of celebrating marriages, that rules enforcing restrained expenditure and forbidding Hindu rites, were laid down in the official constitution of the East African community. Clauses entrenched in the 1962 constitution regarding the marriage ceremony are a vivid case in point:

Note for instance the following articles specifying the kind of celebration permitted on the marriage day :

"238 Friends and relatives may visit the home of either the bridegroom or the bride on the day of the marriage and may be served with soft drinks and/or sweets.

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239 The bride and the bridegroom jointly or separately may arrange either a reception or a party on the day of the marriage or on the day following.

240 If such reception or a party is a joint one, the number of guests shall not exceed 200 persons.

241 If such reception or party is a separate one by the bride or the bridegroom, the number of guests shall not exceed one hundred persons.

242 For the purpose of Articles 240 and 241 guests mean and include family members, relatives and friends.

243 At any such reception or party no alcoholic beverages shall be served.

244 All other feasts, parties, sundowners or receptions to celebrate a marriage are strictly prohibited.

245 All other ceremonies and customs whatsoever celebrated before, at or after marriage, including 'mandvo' 'Paheramni' and 'Pamdi' [customs of essentially Hindu origin] are strictly prohibited.

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246 On the occasion of a marriage, the bride may be given a gift of not more than four simple dresses and one ring by her family and not more than four simple dresses and one ring by the bridegroom or his family.

247 On the occasion of a marriage, the bridegroom may be given one suit and one ring by the bride or his family.

248 Any other exchange of gifts between the bride and bridegroom and their respective families is strictly prohibited.

249 The custom of exhibiting gifts is strictly prohibited. " [84]

Associated with the attempt to eliminate, among other things, Hindu rites and expensive ceremonies, was an equally determined attempt to strip the institution of marriage of any particular religious significance. It is interesting to note how closely the form of marriage-ceremony prevalent among the Ismailis today resembles the "civil marriage" in the West. Once again, the process of modernization is self-evident, though the Aga Khan also explained that the Islamic concept of marriage was very much in the nature of a secular "contract":

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"It is important that it should be realized among non-Muslims that the Islamic view of the institution of marriage .... is that it is a question solely of contract, of consent, and of definite and mutually accepted responsibilities. The sacramental concept of marriage is not Islam's; therefore except indirectly there is no question of its religious significance at all, and there is no religious ceremony to invest it with the solemnity and the symbolism which appertain to marriage in other religions, like Christianity and Hinduism. It is exactly analogous to — in the West — an entirely civil and secular marriage in a Registry Office or before a Judge."[85]

Two other vital issues in which there was a determined attack on the remnants of Hindu tradition were, firstly, divorce, and secondly, the attitude towards divorcees and widows. Regarding divorce, the community accepts it as permissible and even necessary in certain conditions such as dissatisfaction arising out of the failure to produce children. In this sense the attitude towards divorce among the Ismailis is remarkably lenient. On the other hand, it is by no means easy for an

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Ismaili couple to procure a divorce according to the constitution in force, except if it is obviously called for. A close study of the constitution would convince one of the justifiability of the Aga Khan's claim (in his auto-biography) that no Ismaili could divorce his wife "for a whim or — as is sometimes falsely imagined in the West — some frivolous or erratic pretext".[86] For in the case of an Ismaili applying for a divorce even on grounds recognized in the constitutions, the first reaction of the council, in accordance with the provisions laid down, is normally to appoint arbitrators with a view to helping the couple resolve their marital difficulties. It is only when such arbitration fails that divorce is considered.[87]

An important issue over which the Aga Khan tried to combat the relics of the Indian outlook among the Ismailis was re-marriage of divorcees and widows. It is likely that in accordance with Hindu customs, there may have been a persistent tendency among the Ismailis to attach a sense of stigma to divorcee-women and widows. The Imam tried through the combined exercise of authority and persuasion, to counteract this stigma. Regarding divorcee-women,

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he pointed out that it was "against the principles of Islam not to remarry a divorced woman".[88] And in the same vein, he continuously tried to fight prejudice against widows: "We are not Hindus. The Islamic faith permits re-marriage. Even the Holy Prophet had married several widows ....."[89] Moreover, the Aga Khan's anxiety for safe-guarding the rights of women in his community, and according them a dignified status compatible with what he believed to be the Islamic teachings on this matter, as opposed to Hindu practices, was also reflected in the various constitutions. The latest constitution, for example, includes very definite clauses enforcing commitment on the part of an ex-husband to provide ample financial provision to his divorced wife and to the children. One cannot, moreover, help being struck by the strictness with which the mahr is enjoined.[90]

The pattern of the discussion in this chapter up to this stage can be divided into two broad sections. To begin with, we examined the role of the austere religiosity of early East African Ismailism, in generating a favourable attitude towards the world. This was followed by a conscious,

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deliberate, and vigorous affirmation of the secular world. Thus a series of secular or modern values came to be fostered by the spiritual aspirations of the Imam and the community. These values were but a reflection of an over-all ethos which saw the temporal world as at least equal in importance to the spiritual world. On the practical plane, these values were essentially derived from the West, and found concrete embodiment in the changes in life-habits and style which we have discussed above. The general movement was a steady advance in the direction of modernization and a swift and decisive break with Indian cultural traits. An interesting question that would immediately cross one's mind here is: What was the sequel to these changes in values? Where did the adoption of European values in language, dress, and domestic habits, lead the Ismailis in terms of their identity and image, both as interpreted by themselves and by others? It is with this aftermath of the ousting of traditionalism, and the emergence of a "modern" set of values, with which we are concerned in this third and last section of this chapter.

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The questions raised above, of course, are questions that can occur in regard to any society undergoing a process of change. What structural alterations affect a society which turns its back on traditional traits inhibiting change, and adopts those values which facilitate adoption to a modern ethos derived from the West? It is obvious that it would be grossly unrealistic to speak of a society "becoming" something else. No society can undergo such metamorphosis any more than an individual can. In other words, no society can can cease to be itself and "become" another society altogether, any more than an individual can erase his own existence and become another individual. Here, of course, we are running the risk of stating the obvious. But it brings us to an important truth — in many societies, the process of innovation or inculcation of new values, is bound to produce a reaction and a reassertion of certain "original" values, in order to safeguard the identity of the community or nation in question. In some instances this process takes place in three phases: firstly, there is an enthusiastic and unrestrained welcome of the new values (here we are primarily speaking of the adoption of Western values by non-Western societies).

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This phase indeed may display an extravagant imitation of Western customs and habits. The second phase may be one of violent reaction against such importation. This may be followed by an integration of the two sets of values, in an attempt to produce a distinctive outlook suited to the particular needs of the people in question. Often, however, in place of the two later phases, one may find a single stage in which the two processes are fused, to the point of being indistinguishable. Moreover, it is also important to bear in mind that the forces of reaction and reintegration may occur in different societies in varying degrees. Among some people, indeed, they may be so feeble as to lend justification to the charge that what has happened is nothing short of the dissolution of identity, and a violation of history. That in some societies such a thorough-going revolution does indeed occur, is obviously true. It is equally obvious that among other people, a compromise is fashioned at some or other stage in the process, and then one can see the first lag in the evolution of a new and distinctive identity. Our concern here is to ascertain where the Ismailis stand in this

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process in view of the striking and momentous changes in their organization and life-style which we have discussed thus far.

The first point to bear in mind in relation to the process of what may be termed the "de-Indianization" of the Ismailis' mode of life, and the inculcation of "modern" elements in domestic and social life, is that the absolute and towering position of the Imam in the community, and hence the over-riding force of devotion and obedience to him, ruled out the possibility of too fundamental a change of identity. The very existence of the Imam continuously kindled the religious consciousness of the community. But the actual state of affairs was even more fascinatingly complex. For one thing, the religious and the secular domains of community life were integrated to the point of fusion, for the Imam was both the temporal as well as spiritual ruler, and neither he nor the community saw any dichotomy in the two roles. Indeed, the community hardly saw <u>two</u> roles in the Imam — for them he had only <u>one</u> role — and that included almost any role imaginable. Still more fascinating is the fact that the Imam <u>himself</u> initiated and supervized the process of modernization .

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This phenomenon of his initiating changes while retaining the authority of his own office unchanged, was not just an aspect of the community's structure, but a focal point of its dynamics. This factor, however, deserves a much fuller treatment, and will be considered at length in the next chapter.

The reforms encouraged by the Aga Khan in matters of domestic life and social relationship were counter-balanced by attempts to make certain modifications and reservations. It is for this reason that we have been using the term "modernization" rather than "Westernization" for these reforms. For the term "Westernization" is likely to imply a more wholesale importation of Western cultural traits than the facts suggest. Secondly — and this is perhaps a more important factor — the term "Westernization" is likely to obscure or even distort the aim at which the reforms in question were directed. In the case of the Ismailis, the target at which the changes were aimed, at least consciously and in part, was better adaptation to the East African political and cultural climate. The term "modernization" is therefore more suitable in so far as it helps to prevent mis-conception on these lines. No doubt, this argument

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in its general outline is valid in the case of many (perhaps most) societies, and not just the Ismailis. Moreover, the term "modernization" does not annul the likelihood of the new values being derived predominantly or even solely from the West. The important point is that such values undergo an alteration in total perspective as soon as they are filtered and incorporated in the native structure of the "host" society. Nor is the use of the term "modernization" intended in a qualitative sense. In other words, it does not stand merely for a mild or lesser form of "Westernization". For a society may borrow cultural or ideological elements which may be "foreign" but which, in the very process of being transplanted onto the native soil, may assume a different shape and thus cease to be "foreign". Even if this does not happen, such elements may yet come to be juxtaposed against others which may not only be different from the former but also antagonistic to them. All that we can say in the case of the Ismailis at this stage is that the incorporation of the Western mode of life we have discussed above was counter-balanced by the rejection of another important component of Western culture,

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as we shall see below. Secondly, the process of modernization was liable to create a certain imbalance in the system, the potential threat of which provoked a move designed to prevent such a possibility from materializing. We shall examine each of these two forms of counter-balance in turn.

On going through the farmāns made over the period during which cultural change in the community was particularly marked, one feature which stands out more than any other, is the diversity of the topics which received the Imam's attention. The tone and method of address also varies to a certain extent. There are recommendations, advices and also commands, backed by a kind of paternal benevolence. Other issues become the subject of criticism, admonishment and warning. Among the things denounced, two items stand out: drinking and smoking. Consumption of tobacco and alcohol is severely censured, and often one finds the Imam dwelling over this subject at great length, using his authority, at one point, and persuasion and reasoned arguments at another. The amount of importance attached to this issue and the extremely frequent repetition of the subject in the farmāns is enough to make one curious. Was this

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extraordinary degree of emphasis placed on the principle of aversion from alcohol and tobacco a symbolic expression of the feeling that Western cultural elements should not be taken up wholesale? Was it, in other words, a symbolic safeguard against excessively strong cultural impact from the West?

To be sure, condemnation of alcohol can be found in farmāns dating as early as the turn of the century. The transformation of the community's life-mode had not yet begun then. Clearly, therefore, the doctrinal value attached to abstinence from alcohol, derived from the Islamic prohibition, can by no means be ruled out. Yet, one cannot overlook the fact that such visible and definite hall-marks of behaviour among most societies serve as concrete proofs of their identity. In other words, while observance of prescribed rites or taboos, dietetic or otherwise, is seldom important in itself and to all intents and purposes may appear "irrational", its social function may, in a lesser or greater degree, serve as an invaluable attempt to reinforce the distinctiveness of a society in the eyes of both outsiders as well as its own members. Especially when a specific taboo is the prominent hall-mark of

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of a society with a long-standing tradition, and has thus come to be crystallized as an outward and concrete proof of membership of that particular society, its social importance may become permanently established. In the case of the Islamic faith, abstinence from alcohol can be seen to have played a similar role. With the Ismailis, therefore, abstinence from alcohol may have served a symbolic function firstly, as a gesture of "holding out" against excessive influx of Western values, and, secondly, as a means of supplying added momentum to the process of increasingly closer identification with Islamic principles that was prevalent in the community at this time. This does not in the least imply that the strong emphasis placed on abstinence from alcohol <u>came into being</u> as a reaction against the threat of undue influence of the West. As we have mentioned above, <u>farmāns</u> condemning alcohol or, indeed, any form of intoxication, were made <u>before</u> any marked reforms in the life-style of the community members on Western lines had been carried out. Nor would it at all be correct to claim that the emphasis on abstinence was a <u>new</u> phenomenon. The Indian background of the community had probably been equally responsible for a feeling of aversion towards

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alcoholic intoxication. Moreover, there is every reason to believe that the Islamic taboo on the consumption of wine (Khamr) was generally observed in ancient and non-Indian Ismailism. All that we are saying here is that while the principle of abstinence from alcohol was already present in Ismailism as part of its history, it assumed an added importance, firstly, as an "antidote" against the importation of the Western life-style (the prohibition of smoking, which is not an Islamic article, alongside that of drinking, serves to reinforce this proposition), and, secondly, as a strengthening element in the sense of belonging to the Islamic community.* The two functions were aspects of a single process — that of modernization accompanied by a re-emphasis on "original" religious principles.

Anybody wishing to illustrate this particular aspect of the Ismaili society in East Africa would have no difficulty in finding suitable quotations. For there are numerous farmāns of the Imam on the subject. We may select here two particular farmāns

* Regarding smoking, ~~there~~ it should be noted that the aversion towards tobacco is not unheard of in Indian Ismaili tradition since the time of the Pīrs, and it also occurs occasionally among other Muslim communities. Nevertheless, the special weight and significance attached to this factor during the Aga Khan III's Imāmat was unprecedented.

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illustrating and supporting the interpretation we have offered above. First of all, however, it is important to bear in mind that when we talk of a counter-reaction to a process of cultural assimilation, it is not necessary that it should follow such a process. In other words, the relationship is functional rather than chronological. Hence, the two processes can very well be simultaneous, and were, indeed, in the case of the Ismailis, largely simultaneous.

In the Aga Khan's mind, the adoption of a "modern" life-style on Western lines in domestic and social life, which he did so much to bring about, was designed to facilitate adaptation to the East African political and cultural life. In his opinion, the Western way of life was the only one suitable in the East African conditions and by contrast, the Indian way of life, in his own words, was a "dead weight".[91] In this process of large-scale assimilation of Western culture, the danger that it might go too far once the ball was set rolling, so to speak, probably created in the Imam's mind, a strong fear and reservation. Hence, drinking and smoking were seen as the more

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undesirable ingredients in Western culture, and abstinence was urged as a precautionary measure. The following message sent to the East African Ismailis in 1953 expressed these feelings so clearly that it is worthwhile quoting it in full:

"My spiritual children of Africa, you have two terrible enemies who approach you as friends but they are the most false friends that man ever had. Your greatest danger is that the new generation, being brought up on Western lines suitable to Africa, may fall into the trap of the devil and accept like other citizens the terrible habit of alcohol. Adopting the Western life, which is the only suitable life for Africa of the future, brings you alcohol, and you may fall and succumb to that terrible and most dangerous of man's enemy: alcohol. Then indeed your future survival will never be the one I wish for you, namely, faith, health, happiness and wealth. Alcohol has been the curse of Europe. It is the curse of modern life. If in your Western outlook you also take in alcohol, then you have indeed lost the battle of life. Alcohol is

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dangerous because it does not come as an enemy but it approaches you as a friend. When you are tired or depressed or have troubles, one little help from alcohol and for the time being you are saved. But that saving is the greatest and most dangerous of all pitfalls. If and when you feel depressed or tired, turn to your spiritual life. Your spiritual life will help you through everything, turn to prayers but not to the poison of alcohol. As all honest doctors will tell you, alcohol is a poison. If you take a great deal of it it will kill you quickly. If you take little of it, it will also kill you slowly but more surely. But whatever you do, it will kill your body but alas more than your body it will kill your soul.

"The other danger, of course, is tobacco. With the Western sort of life in which your children are being brought up, and which alone suits the Africa of the future, it is easy for you men and women, boys and girls, to fall into the habit of a cigarette now and then, with all its evil consequences for the body, and through the body, for the soul. Many kinds of diseases in Europe have increased enormously since more and more people have taken up the habit of smoking. Alike

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for men and women it is one of the curses which the devil has brought to mankind ..... Western life means the economic, good, simple habits, not the horrible poisons which have already done so much evil to Europe, America and such parts of Asia as have indulged in these two dangerous habits."[92]

If this farmān has been quoted at length, it is because it vividly illustrates the extra-ordinary importance that came to be attached to abstinence from alcohol and tobacco as weapons in the battle against excessive Westernization. On few other topics did the Imam speak so passionately as this. The importance of this prohibition in the value-system of the Ismailis is not important so much in itself as for its symbolic significance as a counter-reaction against the West. Moreover, it is interesting to note that through being selective in the process of cultural borrowing from the West, the Aga Khan hoped to enable his followers to "out-Europeanize" the Europeans:

"Racial distinction. It can be stopped in one way only and that is by putting the Europeans to shame. How would they be put to shame?

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"By not imitating their vices such as drinking, smoking, etc. What is drinking? It is just a sleep. The sleep that makes us forget reality .. Their vices ought to be kept aside and their good side to be followed. For instance, sports, both indoor and outdoor games ... cleanliness of domesticity. In such things all must try to be much better than the Europeans are .... This is the time for you all who are the future generation to start to lead the kind of life and make it better and better every day. In that way, by showing the Europeans that others can lead a much better life than themselves, this racial distinction can be stopped."[93]

Two further points ought to be noted in this connection. First there is a marked pre-occupation with tobacco and alcohol in the farmāns of the 40's and the 50's, which helps to support our argument that it was a counter-move against excessive dominance of Western culture in the community, no matter whether this was an actual or anticipated danger. Secondly, it is extremely interesting to note that the argument employed for enforcing the prohibition was shifted from the religious to the

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secular province. Not once in these farmāns is it ever claimed that abstinence from alcohol is a religious obligation. The argument employed in order to support the prohibition is that the habits of drinking and smoking entail unnecessary waste of money, and also endanger physical health. This is in clear contrast to some farmāns made at the turn of the century, when it was pointed out that it was against the tenets of the religion to partake of intoxicating drink. This is by no means an unimportant change. Here we move into the realm of secularization of values, which we shall briefly mention below and consider in greater detail in the next chapter. First, however, it is important to clear another point which may in all likelihood give rise to misunderstanding.

Our discussion of the significance of the condemnation of drinking and smoking in the community is based on the farmāns of the Imam, for it is from these that we have drawn our examples. Hence it is the "ideal" aspect of this prohibition that has been the focus of our attention. To what extent was this ideal, so vigorously propounded by the Imam, effectively incorporated in actual practice, is a question that

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cannot but remain unanswered. The Imam's goal, of course, was to create a life-style in the community which was firmly based on European lines, but which at the same time was selective in its adoption of Western cultural items, in that it excluded the "vices" of drinking and smoking. This is brought out, for instance, in a message from the Imam to the followers, urging them not to spend extravagantly on "good clothes or take European bad habits of smoking, drinking, and imitating them in their bad ways". Instead, he went on, "they should remain true to Ismaili tradition, learning from the Europeans language, arithmetic, and enthusiastic co-operation in these days of undoubted depression".[94] It is arguable that this ambition was idealistic and over-simplified, and that, from the point of view of practical reality, it had a certain naivette about it. It is also arguable that such a cut-and-dry selectivity in cultural assimilation is not feasible; that, if a certain way of life is adopted, it is surely impracticable to attempt to exclude one or two definite items which are as much a component of that particular way of life as anything else. It may also be pointed out that since the Ismailis adopted

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the Western life-mode in a number of essential and intimate matters such as language, dress and domestic affairs, the condemnation of drinking and smoking was liable to be over-shadowed by these other important changes, and thus turn out to be no more than a peripheral reservation. Lastly, it may also be claimed that in actual practice drinking and smoking have been on the increase in the community. Perhaps this is true. Or perhaps the Imam's farmāns had the effect of curtailing or restricting what would otherwise have been a more epidemical tendency. Perhaps, again, the discrepancy between the ideal and the actual has remained more pronounced in this particular issue than in any other. However, we are entirely in the realm of conjecture here. And accurate answers to these questions cannot be obtained except through some kind of controlled empirical inquiry.

Finally, we may examine two other processes that could be considered as an expected sequel to the period of vigorous cultural change in the community. It is necessary here to take note of a most interesting and essential phenomenon in the relationship of religious ideas and social life: once the religious ideation has fostered a certain kind of drive in the

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social domain of a community, the activities or institutions emerging therefrom may have an adverse effect on the very religiosity which was originally responsible, at least in part, for the birth of these activities and institutions. This constitutes what we might call the "boomerang" effect of the role of religious ideas in moulding social and cultural features. For, in the early stages of the evolution of religion in society, religion is both a dominant and pervasive force in the society. Weber tried to demonstrate how this force may either support and encourage, or hamper and discourage worldly activity, depending on the specific elements of the religious ideation in question. Once a religious system has had the effect of stimulating or escalating worldly activity in a certain direction, such activity is likely to acquire a built-in momentum of its own, thus ceasing to stand in need of religious sanctions. This leads us to the concept of Secularization, and since this is a broad question tied up with the very nexus of the community's organization, we shall discuss it in further detail in the next chapter, in connection with the Imāmat.

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We can also, in passing, briefly glance at another important phenomenon which shall deserve fuller treatment later — the yearning to secure a firmer identity through renewed interest in history. Any society undergoing rapid or substantial cultural change is likely to turn to its own history with a special zest, in an attempt to cling to a stable core amidst the flux. Such an enterprise has two aspects: (a) re-interpretation of the present, and (b) revival of the past. As a sequel to the process of "acculturation", a society may be driven to believe that the elements that have been borrowed are compatible with the "original" structure of its thought. This may lead its members or the intellectual elite among them to scan their history in order to secure such a proof. Secondly, revival of the past facillitates assimilation of the present in times of crises and change, since such a revival nourishes the identity of the society.

But all these processes cannot be understood except in reference to the Imāmat. The current of religious ideas and the social dynamics of the community all revolve round the person of the Imam, who thus acquires an immense degree of actual and symbolic importance. We might now gather the various strands

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of analysis that we have explored separately in each chapter, in order to be able to see them in perspective through the central institution of the Imāmat.

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Chapter VII

The Imāmat

For the Ismailis, the Imāmat is all-encompassing. For the student wishing to understand the society in the perspective of one or another of the academic disciplines, the institution of Imāmat is of equally vital importance. In a very real sense, the Imam exercises over-riding and undisputed authority over the community, thus causing all its different facets to converge onto him, and to fuse and unite in his office. He is the centre of the moral, spiritual and social universe of the Ismaili. His significance in the community is both symbolic and real. On one hand, he stands for everything that is regarded in the religious proposition as "sacred" - he is in fact, for the Ismaili, "sacredness" personified. Thus, he is the centre of the Ismaili's prayers, the bestower of blessings and salvation, and the sole connecting-link with the "other" world. As a personal embodiment of the divine or the sacred, he stands on that misty threshold between the temporal world and what is conceived as the world of spiritual reality. His figure is thus shrouded in that enigmatic mysteriousness which is usually associated with those religious personages who are considered to be stationed at the horizons of this world so to speak,

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distanced and yet near and "real", having access to the secrets of the spiritual world and yet appearing as men to men, constrained to speak in cipher and symbols lest they startle and thrust too great a burden on the understanding of the mortal men who form their audience. The Ismaili sees in the Imam an aura emanating from that world of which he believes he can get a glimpse, however fleeting and however hazy in comparison with the all-embracing might he sees in the Imam, through personal religious experience. At the same time, he sees the Imam as a leader of the community, and, in the contemporary epoch, as an influential person, who not only seeks and obtains social and economic blessings for his followers but through the superiority of his knowledge (and fore-knowledge) gives indications to them as to what to do and how to do it in circumstances where social or economic progress is feasible, or where political adjustments are necessary. When it is borne in mind that the latest phase in Ismailism which we have been considering in this thesis has been characterized by rapid and far-reaching social change - and when it is remembered too, that the Imams who have presided over this era and played an active role in initiating these changes are the Aga Khans, well-known as "modern" figures in both the Muslim and the Western world - their role and the significance of their office poses an even more fascinating challenge to the observer. Hence no

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study of contemporary Ismaili society can be complete unless the nature of the mystical awe with which the Ismailis regard the office and the person of the Imam is thoroughly grasped.

In this study, what we are ultimately concerned with is nothing less than the total over-all structure of contemporary Ismaili society in East Africa. Admittedly, with a view to obtaining an element of design or order in the analysis, we made a distinction, in the previous chapters, between broadly separable aspects of the community, such as its religious ideation, its value-system, and its political organization. It is obvious, however, that these elements cannot be considered in strict isolation, nor can they be treated as anything like constituent-pieces adding up to the total picture of the society. While bearing this important point in mind what we are seeking in this chapter on the Imāmat, therefore, is to understand the significance and function of the Imāmat in the over-all structure of the community. Hence the crucial questions that we shall need to ask ourselves are: How do the Ismailis look upon the Imāmat? What effects does this belief have on their lives? What functions does the Imāmat serve in the total existence of the community? What role did it play in the process of social and cultural change marking the history of the community in

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East Africa? What was its relationship to the element of continuity in the community's history? In turn, to what extent, if at all, did the institution of Imāmat itself undergo any change or modification? Finally, what has been the relationship of the mechanisms of continuity and change in the institution of Imāmat and in the community at large, to one another?

In formulating adequate answers to these questions, the various important features of the beliefs regarding Imāmat in contemporary Ismailism have to be carefully borne in mind. However, no sooner than one approaches this task, one cannot but be impressed by the historical dimension of these beliefs. For the notions regarding the Imāmat among the Ismailis today form an accumulated store of beliefs, transmitted through numerous generations via both oral tradition as well as written treatizes. In the process of transmission through different ages and cultures, these ideas underwent significant modifications and adaptations. To trace the nuances of this historical process is a forbidding task, and at any rate is not our object in this chapter. What is essential to keep in mind, however, is that the distinctive set of beliefs regarding the Imāmat in present-day Ismailism, and the intense emotion evoked by these beliefs in the followers, is a product of a

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historical legacy covering many centuries. In examining the function of these beliefs in the structure of contemporary Ismaili society, we are required to ascribe to it a hypothetical equilibrium. In other words, we have to, so to speak, "freeze" a hypothetical moment in the society's contemporary career, so that the various facets of the society can be visualized in structural interaction. This, however, should not blind us to the fact that the ideas concerning the Imāmat in the community constitute an on-flowing stream, with the force of centuries of evolution behind it, and continued influence from both within and without the community ahead of it. Bearing this point in mind, we may now proceed to note the salient elements in the cluster of beliefs concerning Imāmat in contemporary Ismailism.

The most basic element in the doctrine of the Imāmat in Ismailism can be summed up as follows: After the death of the Prophet Muhammad, divine authority and knowledge, and the right and capacity to transmit divine guidance, passed on to 'Alī, who was thus the first Imam. Various arguments are employed in order to support this belief. The most famous of these is the claim that the Prophet himself appointed 'Alī as his successor during his life-time at Ghadīr Khum, saying "'Alī is the lord of those whose lord I am", and

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"God, befriend those who befriend him, help those who help him, and disregard those who disregard him."[1] The Sunnīs, of course, have always insisted that the Ghadīr khum incident never took place. Another argument used to support the doctrine of 'Alī's right to the Imāmat hinges on the claim that divine guidance was necessary even after the death of the Prophet, and that this "could not be left merely to millions of mortal men, subject to the whims and gusts of passion and material necessity, capable of being momentarily but tragically misled by greed, by oratory, or by the sudden desire for material advantage."[2] Selected verses of the Qur'ān are also usually cited by the Shī'a and interpreted in such a way as to lend support to the dogma of 'Alī's succession. The central theme of all the dogmatic polemics that one finds in Shī'a texts is simply that 'Alī was the legitimate successor to the Prophet - "legitimate" in that his succession was divinely ordained - and that all authority properly belonged to him. Furthermore, after his death, his knowledge of divine mysteries was passed on to his successor, who thus took over the divinely instituted office of leadership of the Islamic community. Thus this leadership belonged to the descendants of the Prophet, through Fāṭima and 'Alī, and they alone were his rightful successors.

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So far the Ismailis are with the other Shi'a groups in upholding the succession of 'Ali and his lineal descendants. There is an important point, however, where the beliefs diverge. The Ismailis insist that Imamat is everlasting. In other words, there should always be an Imam present on earth. The idea that the Imam may be hidden (ghayb) is as repugnant to them as the belief that the leadership of the Islamic community after the prophet was of an entirely secular nature. The fact that there is no direct descendant of the Prophet recognized by any of the other Shi'a groups as a living Imam is, according to the Ismailis, a clear proof that their genealogies were spurious. The Ismaili Imam is ever-present. The earth would perish if he were to disappear. He is the bearer of the nur or the "divine light", and thus there cannot be more than one Imam at a time. He is called the Hadir Imam (i.e. the "present Imam"), and also Imami-Zaman, (i.e. the "Imam of the Age"). On entering the jamatkhana, the Ismailis usually proclaim aloud, "Hay Zinda", i.e. "he (the Imam) is living (and with us)". The others around him respond by saying "Kayam Paya" (i.e. "We have him for ever"). When the Imam dies, his successor inherits his nur. It is he who is then called the Hadir Imam.

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The existing Imam nominates one of his descendents as his successor before his death. Only the Imam has a right to decide who is going to succeed him. Furthermore, only the Imam possesses the divine essence or nūr. Members of his family are thus ordinary men and women, and though they may be respected by the community, they are not all-knowing like the Imam, nor are they exempt from error and sin.

The function of the Imam is to guide his followers in temporal and spiritual matters. Traditionally, Ismailism always insisted that this guidance was in the form of ta'wil, or elucidation of the "inner meaning" of the Qur'ān. This point, however, has been abandoned in modern Ismaili doctrine. An important argument that occurs in ancient Ismailism and is especially emphasized in contemporary Ismaili thought, is that the guidance of the Imam is dictated by changing circumstances. Thus, as new events occur and fresh circumstances arise, the Imam also issues fresh guidance in accordance with the changing situation. It is for this reason that uninterrupted succession to the Imāmat is essential, and it is because of the need for new approaches that the advices given in the past by the Prophets or Imams become inadequate or

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inapplicable. Owing to this, and since all Imams are the same in essence, any particular Imam may abrogate any of his predecessors' or his own advice, not because of error on his part or that of his predecessor, but because the advice issued at any one particular time is appropriate only to that time and is not necessarily applicable at another moment. It follows, therefore, that the cardinal duty of the Ismaili is to obey the Imāmi-zamān or the "Imam of the Age" without questioning his dictates. Each individual Ismaili should swear allegiance to the Imam at least once in his life-time. He should also regularly pay him a fraction of his income (usually the eighth part) as tribute (dasond). He should also regularly serve him (nowadays "service" is normally conceived as donation of money to the Imam or to various causes in the community). It is only through obedience and service to the Imam that the Ismaili can hope to attain worldly and spiritual happiness.

One of the most striking aspects of the veneration displayed towards the Imam in Ismailism, the degree of which marks a contrast with some of the other Shī'a communities, is its mysticism. As mentioned above, the Imam holds the position of a supreme guide in the

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community by virtue of his possessing the divine light (nūr-i-Ilāhī). "Light" (nūr), or the "light of Imāmat" (nūri-Imāmat) are terms which recur very frequently in Ismaili literature. Of course, the Ismaili conception of Muhammad is correspondingly mystical, for Muhammad and 'Alī are said to be derived from the same Light:

> "Al-lāh, Muhammad, and 'Alī are one and the same substance,
> Though to those whose vision is imperfect they appear as three."[3]

Thus, in certain areas during the Fāṭimid period and in nearly all cases in Nizārī Ismailism, the Imam was considered mystically co-substantial with God. The following verse by a Persian Ismaili clearly demonstrates the nature of the awe and reverence felt for the Imam:

> "O thou, the attribute of the Soul of the World,
> O thou, who bringest faith and piety to all!
> There is no one except Thee who really speaks,
> Speaks in both world, by the tongues of all.
> Though God has sent an Apostle,
> There is no Universal Spirit and Soul except Thee.
> Thou wert a companion of all, and from Thee
> Everyone's heart and soul is full of light." [4]

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An interesting corollary to this mystical view of the Imam is that the essence of the Imam is a single, indivisible substance, despite the fact that there is an unending succession of Imams. The personality of the Imam is often called jāma (i.e. dress), and the facts of his birth and death are considered as observable phenomena within the temporal world, following natural laws. However, it is an indivisible substance, existing beyond the confines of time which masquerades in this temporal guise. For "if the Divine Manifestation (zuhūr)is to take place in an ordinary mortal body, the latter, inevitably, has to become old and worn out, like clothes of man, and ultimately it would be necessary to replace it with a new one."[5]
It is this idea which leads to utterances such as these:

"Thou art a being that appears as a man to men,
before the eyes of men, in this world;
In the form of a man thou art and with men thou remainest.
Thou comest amongst men not showing thy real face,
(Because) in thy pure and attributeless essence
thou art void of every (form)."[6]

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Again, as recently as in 1951, the Imam himself said in a farmān:

> "The light of the Imam is one and the same, its forms are different, just as we have blue, red, yellow and green bulbs, but the electricity in them is the same. The substance is the same, the facets are different."[7]

Hence, when for instance the Aga Khan III died at the age of eighty, after a rich career as an internationally respected personality and as an Imam who had commanded tremendous authority and awe among his followers, his grandson, who succeeded him at the age of twenty was regarded with the same reverence in the community. This was in conformity with the idea that all Imams are one being, who manifests himself sometimes "as a son, and on another occasion as a father, sometimes as a child, or young man, or an old man ....."[8]

Thus the Imam is sometimes called the "manifest form of God".[9] The Imams are also considered to be the names and attributes of God (asmā' wa ṣifāt). "Thus the lights of that Name and the activities .... of that attribute become apparent ... His word is the word of God, his acts are the acts of God, his command, utterance ....., order, desire, knowledge, might, face..,

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hand, hearing, vision - all are those of God."[10] He is the ultimate source of all knowledge.[11] He is, in fact, the Perfect Man (al-Insān al-Kāmil).[12] Because he is beyond human comprehension, his behaviour and actions cannot be judged or criticized by his followers. For the believer ought to recognize that "it is truth which follows the Imam, not the Imam who has to follow (any canon of) truth."[13]

Thus the Imam is the very fountainhead of the spiritual aspirations of the believer, and the very centre of the community's secular as well as religious life. Furthermore, the religiosity of the Ismailis, as we have seen, is characterized by a strong, mystical element. The term murīd is as commonly used in the community to refer to the Ismailis as the term mu'min, thus testifying to the Sufistic element in the faith. The climax of the spiritual life of the murīd is believed to be attained when, through mystical love, he gets inwardly united with the Imam. By attaching himself to the Imam, his identity gets progressively transmuted till it gets totally merged with the essence or nūr of the Imam, which is generally held to happen after one's death. During life, however, the murīd can come increasingly closer to the Imam till

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mystical contact and illumination are achieved. For this to happen, the Imam should become the centre of his thoughts and worries, and in fact permeate his being. Thus a witness in the court-case of 1908 said, "He is our Hazar Imam and the garland of my heart and the light of my eyes."[14] The link between the Imam and the disciple is thus considered to be an intimate one, closer than that between parents and off-spring, for the mu'min's heart is a "sanctuary for the Imam to reside in".[15] The disciple should love the Imam with the intensity of the desert-traveller thirsty for water."[16] It is, however, the spirit of the Imam and not his physical person that should be the object of the murīd's worship. For whoever worships the physical person of the Imam is an idolator." (būt parast)[17]

Closely associated with these mystical sentiments is the traditional Ismaili dichotomy between exterior aspect of religion (zāhir), and its interior core (bāṭin). The relation of the former to the latter corresponds to the relation of the husk or skin of a fruit, to its kernel or core.[18] The bāṭin is considered superior to the zāhir.[19] Time and again the Aga Khan III stressed that Ismailism was a "spiritual"

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(rūhānī) faith, and that this side of it ought to be grasped by the followers. It should be noted that the traditional habit, among Ismaili intellectuals, of finding an allegorical interpretation for every verse of the Qur'án, and indeed, of positing an allegorical equivalent for every observable phenomenon, has disappeared in modern Ismailism. Nevertheless, traces of the old approach still exist, but it can be said that in modern Ismailism, metaphor has largely replaced allegory. It is in connection with the Imam and the murīd's relationship with him, that the zāhir-bāṭin dualism is particularly pronounced.

The highest bliss that the Ismaili can achieve is the vision (dīdār) of the Imam. Three times a day in the jamātkhānās, the Ismailis pray for zāhiri wa bāṭini dīdār. The zāhiri dīdār is said to consist in getting a glimpse of the Imam, which in itself is considered an incomparable blessing. It is because of the supreme value attached to a physical glimpse of the Imam, however momentary and fleeting, that deputations of Ismailis undertook long and perilous journeys in historical times to see the Imam. Corresponding to the physical sight of the Imam, however, is what is

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called an "inner vision", i.e. comprehension of the true nature or essence of the Imam. It is this "inner vision" that is denoted by the term bāṭini dīdār: "Thus the higher knowledge (ma'rifat) of your eye is to recognize the image of that human face in the pupil of your eye, which is that of one who guides you to the right path, knowing that he is exactly that person. He, the Guide (i.e. the Imam), comes with all the features of the ordinary man.

But with eyes alone you cannot hold his image in the heart too, - the inner vision, of the heart, is different from the vision of the eye; what the heart sees is luminousness (nūrāniyyat)."[20]

Thus the idea of spiritual progress occurring in stages occupies an important place in Ismaili theology: "The (real) believer ... is one who from the ... sharī'at [i.e. the law and ritual prescriptions] arrives at ṭarīqat [i.e. the mystical "way"], and from the latter to ḥaqīqat [i.e. "truth"], which is the real inner meaning (bāṭin) of sharī'at. Sharī'at may be compared to a candle, ṭarīqat to the path, and ḥaqīqat to the destination.... The foundation of ḥaqīqat is to recognize the Imam."[21] In modern Ismailism, an institutional embodiment is provided for the mystical

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element in its theology in what is known as the Bait-ul-Khayāl (literally, "house of contemplation"). Membership of it is purely voluntary, and initiates learn from the Aga Khan about matters connected with this subject.

From the foregoing account of Ismaili beliefs concerning the Imāmat, it is obvious that the latter institution is the object of tremendous devotion on the part of the followers. Here we are concerned chiefly with the social functions of this institution in the community, but the Imam's over-ridingly crucial role in the life of the community cannot be understood unless the force of the individual believer's mystical attachment to the Imam is grasped. The Imāmat serves as a dominating force in the religious life of the individual devotee, and much of this dynamism is reflected collectively in social life within the community. The very personality and physical presence of the Imam, when he visits his followers, casts a grand spell, a solemn fascination, and provokes an admixture of intense love and awe in the believers. It is not surprising therefore that when the Imam speaks on social issues, on education and health, on social welfare and economic expansion, the prodigious energy invested in the believer's devotion to the Imam finds an outlet in vigorous communal activity.

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Thus, it is essentially owing to the intense psychic energy focussed onto anything to do with the Imam, ranging from the mere mention of his name to his physical presence among the followers, that any aspect of community development blessed or recommended by him is taken up with singular fervour. The nature and source of this religious intensity forms a very complex subject, and the student should be on guard against facile explanations. But among the many possible lines of inquiry, it would be interesting to consider this phenomenon in the light of C.G. Jung's postulate of archetypes. Jung paraphrases the concept of the archetype at one point as an "autonomous primordial image".[22] Hence the term "archetype" is employed by him to denote certain universally prevalent images which, he believes, stem from corresponding motifs inherent and embedded in the psychic life of mankind. W. Montgomery Watt in his discussion of religion employs an alternative term,namely, "dynamic image", as roughly synonymous with "archetype", avoiding, however, the theoretical assumptions tied to the latter term in Jungian theory. He considers the inspired leader or king to be the bearer of one particular

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"image" of this kind.[23] It does not need stressing that this proposition can by no means be conclusively applied to the Ismaili Imāmat, as part of a theoretical analysis. Nevertheless, it is useful to consider it as a heuristic measure. In addition, no matter in whatever way the intense mystical attachment to the Imam in the religious experience of the Ismaili is understood, it would be further necessary to relate the interpretation in question to the collective manifestation of this religiosity in the community's relationship to the Imam as a leader.

Having noted the salient elements in Ismaili beliefs concerning the Imāmat, and having raised the fundamental question as to the nature of the profound mystical veneration of the Imam in the community, we may now proceed to consider the effects of this belief in the history of the community in East Africa. One of the most important facts which has emerged in the course of the discussion throughout this thesis is that the history of the Ismailis in East Africa has been marked by momentous and far-reaching changes. What function did the concept of Imāmat serve in this period of rapid and profound social change? To begin with, the sense of continuity embedded in the idea of a permanent linear succession to the Imāmat is responsible for a

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fundamental historical awareness. This serves to correct any obsessive pre-occupation with the present, and to create in the Ismailis a sense of timelessness, owing to the long and meaningful ancestry of the Imam. In practical terms, this means durability under stress. Here the function of the Imāmat is essentially redressive. He corrects imbalance by his very presence, for he represents a tradition that stretches back over many hundreds of years. The Imāmat is greater than him, and in keeping this "greater than now" awareness constantly in the foreground of the attention of the Ismailis through his very presence and existence, he lends them a vital pivot on which the whole structure of the community comes to rest, and with whose support they can carry out far-reaching changes. In this way the Imāmat generates a corrective mechanism, for it checks change from toppling over into uncontrollable drift. Even more important than this function of the Imāmat, and theoretically opposite to it, is what can be called its catalytic function. For the very stability of the Imāmat renders change and development safer prospects, since it maintains an unmoving base on which movement can occur. In this way, even drastic changes can occur at a relatively speedy pace, for the Imāmat offers a basic source of security. In other

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words, the Imāmat, as represented by an actual living Imam, makes it easier, by providing a basic stability, for change to occur at a superrerogatory level. Hence the Imāmat turns out to be a constant source of momentum. Moreover, the process of change resting on such an underlying, "subliminal" level is likely to prove more ordered and less haphazard. This harmonious combination of change and constancy is one of the most fundamental features of Ismaili society today. H.S. Morris, for instance, has observed the same harmony between the changing and unchanging aspects of contemporary Ismaili society: "The living imam in the persons of the ... Aga Khans was a symbol of the permanent, changeless aspects of the sect, in a period of rapid and confusing transition. It was a symbol in no way equalled by the concealed and silent imams of other Shi'a sects or the learned men of the Sunni Muslims."[24]

The Imāmat also serves to generate in the Ismailis a sense of self-importance and mission. Such a sense of self-esteem is specially vital to the community in view of memories of the ferocious programmes of persecution directed against them in earlier times, and in view of the fact that they are even today a minority,

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albeit a prosperous one. Because the Imam embodies the tradition of Islam and the authority of the Prophet, through him the Ismailis can consider themselves to be linked to the mainspring of a world religion. Similarly, because the Imam, while being a contemporary, is also "archaic," in that he embodies a significant genealogy stretching back over many hundreds of years, the Ismailis derive from him a sense of temporal vastness. Thus through him the Ismailis attain a vital sense of self-importance. To take a striking instance, one Ismaili writer draws a genealogical chart linking the Imam to Muhammad, and then further linking the latter to Adam! The Imam is thus depicted as lineally and spiritually connected with the First Man, and to the Prophets of old (Noah, Abraham, Moses, etc.).[25] The function of this what may be called "unhistorical history" is obvious - it lends to the Ismailis a sense of universality and vastness, both temporal and spatial. In this way, it furnishes them with an intellectual and spiritual foothold in history and in existence.

So far we have been considering the importance of the Imāmat on a relatively abstract plane. Moreover, we have been dealing essentially with the institution of the Imāmat and not with the Imam as a person, though

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the benefits and the force of the Imāmat in the community could only be manifested in and through the Imam. We may now turn to the personal functions of the Imam in the community in recent history, with the present Aga Khan and his grandfather in mind. We have already seen that the religious beliefs regarding the Imāmat in the community makes the Imam a focal point in the lives of his followers. It is obvious, however, that the Imam would not have had supreme power in the community had he not actually and literally been the centre and head of its organization. How was the doctrine of the Imam as an absolute divine sovereign translated into an organizational set-up in which he was invested with effective supreme power? In order to understand this process, it is necessary to glance back into history up to a certain point.

During the time of the Pīrs, as we have seen in the chapter on the gīnāns, the Imam was an abstraction, since he lived far away from the Indian Khojā community, and since none of the latter except those who travelled to Persia for his dīdār, had set eyes on him. Mentally, of course, he was the very essence of the religious experience of the devotee, but the organization and circumstances of the community were such that the Imam had not been forced to play the role of a

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leader in effect, in those matters which we would nowadays categorize as political, social, or economic as distinguished from religious. With the arrival of the Imam Hasan'alīshāh in India, however, the situation was radically changed. The Imam was now present among the followers, as an overlord with real powers. They had to defer to his orders, and his authority was thus exercised now from close by; accordingly, the effects of his presence were real and immediate. The chief way in which the followers had to acknowledge his authority was through regular payment of the tribute, and although the majority of them continued to pay him the customary dues, a minority, as we have seen in Chapter III, dissented and forced the issue to the High Court in Bombay. As we saw earlier, the outcome of the suit was overwhelmingly in favour of the Imam, and thus his authority was established by law. An exactly similar course of events repeated itself in the court-suit filed against his grandson, the Aga Khan III in 1905. As the questions raised at that time touched on some fundamental principles concerning the Imāmat, it is worthwhile discussing them briefly.

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The focal point of contention in the 1905 suit, once again, was the custom of paying tributes and offering property as homage to the Imam. But this practice depended in turn on the Imam's religious position, and therefore the plaintiffs found it necessary to question the absoluteness of the latter, in order to vindicate their claims that the property received by the Imam from his followers belonged to his whole family and not solely to himself (the leading plaintiffs in the case were relations of the Imam). That the successive Aga Khans had in some way occupied a special position in the community was a fact which the plaintiffs were obliged to recognize. But they got round the difficulty created by this by claiming that each of the Aga Khans had been "titular heads" of the family.[26] They also made the far-reaching and fundamental claim that the whole family of the Aga Khan was "holy".[27]

Thus, what was at stake in this case was nothing short of the doctrine of the absolute power of the Imam. In other words, the Imāmat was going through a defining-phasein its history, by claiming that the whole family of the Imam was "holy", and that they should have a say

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in the management of the community, the dissenting members of the Aga Khan's family were aiming at a dilution and modification of his powers. Similarly, the claim that the Imam was an Ithna'asheri had an equally derogatory implication, for if this was so, the Imam could have no justification for the absolute authority he held as an Ismaili Imam (since the Ithna'asheris do not believe in a living Imam). As Justice Russell, who adjudicated in the suit aptly observed, the object of this last claim was to "depreciate the position" of the Imam.[28] Hence, the defending party argued that according to the tenets of the Ismaili faith, only the Imam was entitled to veneration and tribute from the followers, and that the other members of his family had no divine honours.[29] They also pointed out that according to Ismaili tradition, the Imam in office always indicated which of his issue was to succeed him (the technical term for the designation of the Imam's successor was nass) and that each of the Aga Khans had done so.[30] Moreover, the Aga Khan exercised an authority commensurate with his role as an Ismaili Imam, which was far higher in degree than that of a Pesh Imam, a term denoting the Muslim Imam who leads the prayer, carries out ritual slaughter,

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of animals for food, and so on.[31] Similarly, the Imam was not a mere saiyad, but God's Nūr or Light.[32] The statements of the defendants, as we have seen earlier, were upheld by the High Court as being in perfect accord with the historical tenets of the faith, and the claims of the plaintiffs were dismissed as defamatory and false. The result was that the doctrine of the Imāmat was reinforced by the findings of a British High Court. The Aga Khan was thus confirmed as the supreme leader of the community, and the sole owner of communal property, not only in accordance with the doctrines of the sect, but also with British legal backing. In the period that lay ahead, there were to be many occasions when the Imam's guidance was called for by his followers; it is a measure of the absolute authority of the Aga Khan that this guidance was effective, and of his good sense and accomplishment, that it was such as to bring about rapid and far-reaching reforms in the community in the direction of modernization.

In the introduction to the Haft Bāb, a Persian Ismaili text, Ivanow remarks that the Imam had a status of a kind of feudal lord in the community.[33] This may no doubt have been true of the period when the Imams

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lived in Persia. It was certainly true of the First and Second Aga Khans. But the Aga Khan III, to begin with, decided to purge his household since it seems that he was exasperated by the problem posed by a multiplying number of dependents descended from "some of princely birth, some knights and peasants", and by the financial burden of supporting them all.[34] This steady dismemberment of what he describes, referring to his grandfather's dependents, as the "train of a medieval prince"[35] (and, incidentally, this pruning-process was one of the events which led to the court-suit of 1905), marked the emergence of the Imam as an independent and powerful leader, detached from his followers and therefore in a large measure exempt from the need of currying favour with any particular section of them.

The independence and the sovereign status of the Imam in the community had far-reaching effects on the reforms in the organization and values of the community. To begin with, as we have seen, the religious beliefs concerning the Imam invested him with a mystical sacredness and grandeur, and so caused him to tower over everything else. Secondly, in the period we are considering, the court-suits gave legal sanction to his

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control over the finances and the affairs to the community. Over and above this, there is a third factor of weighty importance - the personal influence and prestige of the Aga Khan III and his successor (the present Aga Khan) on an international scale. The ingredients of supreme leadership were thus complete. The absolute authority of the Imam in the Ismaili community becomes especially striking when it is contrasted with the other Indian communities settled in East Africa. Among the Hindus, for example, there were a variety of sects and extremely loosely organized cults. Correspondingly, corporate organization was lacking, just as it was also lacking among the Sikhs, the Parsis, and the Sunnī Muslims. Even more impressive and relevant is the contrast between the position of the Imam among the Ismailis and that of the Mujtahids and the Dā'ī among the Ithna'asheris and the Bohras, respectively. The Mujtahids hardly wielded any power in the social or economic affairs of the Ithna'asheris in East Africa. Moreover, the congregations in various parts of the country were independent, and, although there existed a central co-ordinating body at Mombasa, each congregation managed its own affairs. It is also significant that the property of the community was vested in trustees. Thus there was very little resemblance here

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with the structure of Ismaili leadership and organization.

The comparative value of the case of the Bohras is even greater in view of the existence of the Dāī. To begin with, the Dā'ī was considered as the deputy of the hidden Imam, and thus, theoretically, his position was less total and absolute than that of the Imam of the Ismailis. On the other hand, in practice it often seemed that the reverence accorded to the Dā'ī was equivalent to that which one would expect to be reserved for the hidden Imam. There were several other factors, however, which limited the actual powers of the Dā'ī. To begin with, his authority was modified by the existence of an elaborate hierarchy of religious officials. In India, under the Dā'ī was the madhūn, under whom in turn was the mukasir. The person who acted as the representative of the Dā'ī in secular matters was the 'amil, who in turn was selected from the mashāikh or the "elders" of the community. Lowest in the religious hierarchy were the mullās, who carried out sundry preaching and ritual duties. In East Africa, the Dā'ī was represented by the grand 'amil, who as a matter of fact was a relative of his, thus creating a situation markedly different from that of the Ismaili

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Imam, whose authority was not in any important way delegated to any family member. However, the religious hierarchy by itself need not have led to the modification of the Dā'ī's powers. The fact that the Dā'ī was not legally in absolute control of the affairs and property of the community was the crucial factor in rendering him less secure than the Ismaili Imam. It is most interesting to note that a case similar to the Bombay High Court Suit of 1866 when the position of the Ismaili Imam had been challenged, was also brought against the Dā'ī in the same court in 1920. In contrast to the judgement delivered in the Ismaili suit, however, in the case of the Bohras the powers of the Dā'ī were defined and restricted in some important respects. In a nutshell, the court concluded that apart from entirely personal offerings, the property of the community was held by the Dā'ī as trustee rather than owner, though it was not binding that he have co-trustees. As H.S. Morris noted, the outcome of the case "was a compromise which satisfied neither side. It did not enable the Dai to stamp out dissent nor did it allow him to accumulate a fortune like that of the Aga Khan, thus giving him the opportunity to organize the welfare of his sect with detachment and benevolence."[36]

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Moreover, the consequence of this arrangement was that the Dā'ī remained relatively dependent on the elders of the community, and "his failure to establish himself as an absolute ruler and his need to maintain traditional forms and taxes to support his position meant that he himself always tended to hold conservative views at a time when an influential section of his followers wanted change."[37]

Thus there were two important facets of the Imam's position in the Ismaili community which the foregoing discussion brings to light. Firstly, the Imam wielded unquestioned authority in the community, and secondly, he was markedly independent of the community. The independent nature of his position was heightened by a specific article in the religious beliefs concerning the Imāmat - viz. that the actions and character of the Imam were incomprehensible to the limited intellect of ordinary human beings, and thus ought not be criticized. Even if certain actions of the Imam were seemingly contradictory to the precepts of the religious law, they ought not be viewed by the followers as evidence of shortcoming in his character, because "he, belonging not only to this world, but also to the world

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of God and Divinity, may be moved by special motives which are not comprehensible to ordinary mortals."[38] No doubt, this idea enhanced the Imam's independence and supremacy.

Through historical developments described earlier, the absolute sway of the Imam in the community came to be institutionalized. Thus the massive and intricate organizational machinery in the community in East Africa was hinged on the Imam. While the behaviour of the Ismailis relating to community affairs was governed by an elaborate constitution, while the rights of divorced women, etc. were safeguarded through clear regulations, and while pains were taken to prevent councils from taking arbitrary measures, through careful provisions for appeals to higher councils, the Imam himself was above the law. The constitution currently in force, for instance, makes this unmistakably clear when under the caption "Power Reserved to Mowlana Hazar Imam" it categorically states that "Nothing herein contained shall affect the Absolute Power and Sole Authority of Mowlana Hazar Imam to alter, amend, modify, vary or annul at any time or to grant dispensation from the Constitution or any part thereof."[39]

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It is important to note that at least in recent years, the Imam has seldom, if ever at all, used the absolute powers invested in him by law. His procedure in fact has been contrary to his absolute position in the community. As a biographer of the Aga Khan notes, the changes in the community undertaken in the post-war years were ushered in through consultations and discussions rather than orders and commands, since the Aga Khan "preferred his leaders to understand what he was doing and to accept the changes of their own free will." [40] Nevertheless, the fact that the Imam was by law endowed with supreme and unquestioned say in the community is important, since this theoretical provision had real effects on the organization of his followers.

The sovereign position of the Imam in the community had important results in mainly two areas of its history in East Africa - centralization of its institutions, and social and economic reforms. As regards the former, it was because the Imam was the pivot of the community's structure that such a massive organization could be sustained. Since loyalty to the Imam was a cardinal tenet of the faith which all Ismailis held in common, they were brought closer together. In this way the Imāmat caused the individuals in the community to be

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strongly cemented together. The centralizing role of the Imam was also reflected in the jamātkhānā, which thus served an integrative function. Furthermore, since all Ismaili communities in the world paid identical allegiance to the Imam, a sense of common belonging pervaded them all. Again, since the Imam was at the apex of the organizational network, the latter received general support. He also acted as a "clearing-house", as it were, for tributes paid to him, thus re-distributing it in the community for use in different projects. Finally, he was the ultimate resort in case of disputes or conflicts within the community. This last function was especially important in that the many stresses and strains arising within the system, not surprising in view of the rapid and radical changes in the circumstances of the community in East Africa, found an outlet in the hearing of the Imam. Since the Imam's pronouncement was law, the conflicts occurring in the community were thus checked from having the extreme effect of breaking the system. On the other hand, the aloofness or "distancing" of the Imam from the community meant that he evidently did not enter any partisan situation in the community, with the result that all aggressive and hostile feelings in the community were directed against

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the institutions and not against the Imam. It is by no means unusual to hear Ismailis swear uncompromising resentment against one or another leader in the community, and intense devotion or homage to the Imam in the same breath. Owing to the fact that the Imam is above criticism, and owing to his apparent impartiality and his towering above the para-politics in the community, it becomes possible for aggressive feelings to be vented without the core of the structure being damaged.

The second important area of the community's history in which the supremacy of the Imam had an immediate efficacy and relevance was that of social and economic reforms described earlier in this study. As we saw earlier, credit for these reforms in the community is invariably attributed to the Imam. Indeed, many of these reforms were initiated by the Imam, although the details might have been worked through by the community leaders. Once again, the fact that the Imam was an indispensable and invulnerable pillar at the centre of the structure made changes uniquely possible. He alone was beyond change. Only his position could not be compromised in any way. Everything else could be

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altered if he so wished. He could abrogate any of his own or his predecessors' farmāns if he thought that such abrogation was called for by changing circumstances. Even cardinal religious principles, excepting the ideas about the Imāmat, could be altered. It was this principle that rendered possible drastic and far-reaching changes in the organization and values of the community-members. So long as the principle of the Imāmat could be preserved as an impregnable core of the community's structure, everything else could be changed. Hence such radical changes as the elimination of important cultural traits, and the adoption of local citizenship became possible. These changes amounted to a change of identity, but so long as that part of the identity which was embedded in allegiance to the Imam was preserved, the rest was progressively, though by no means painlessly, transformed.

In view of the necessity for profound changes posed by the circumstances in East Africa, it is not surprising that the doctrine of the importance of the living Imam who guides his followers in accordance with the period in which he lives, always a cardinal principle in Ismailism, received added emphasis.

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Thus here we see, once again, an instance of reciprocal and harmonious relationship between religious ideation and social facts. The principle that there should always be an Imam on earth is an age-old tenet of Ismailism. But in the period we are considering, this principle acquired a special relevance. In early Ismailism, indeed, it was admitted that although the Imam could not disappear from the earth as such, he could, under adverse conditions, retire into hiding or disguise, when his "proof" or hujjat would take over his functions.[41] This idea has totally disappeared in modern Ismailism. The Imam, it is held, should not only be ever-present, but continually available to his followers. His function is thus closely associated with the idea of temporal relativism. The result is that changes become easier and more acceptable. As a sociologist of religion observed, one mechanism of facilitating change in social systems is through the idea of "'continuing revelation' from on high, the belief that 'the heavens are not closed', that the final word has not been delivered."[42] The provision of such a mechanism for sanctioning change has the effect of making the system "seem more likely to maintain continuing influence in

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a changing world than would religious systems with a 'final answer', unchanging approach".[43] In the case of the Ismailis, the bearing of this principle on the reforms in the community is only too obvious.

An obverse aspect of the stress on a living Imam in Ismailism was that pilgrimage to the shrines or tombs of dead Imams and pīrs was considered to be a heinous sin. Whereas among some Shī'a sects pilgrimage to important shrines is a holy act, among the Ismailis it is considered as deserving condemnation of the same order as idolatory in Islam. Since it is the living Imam who is supreme in the community, commemoration of a bygone Imam violates the fundamental tenet of the faith. Moreover, since the nūr (light) and power once possessed by the dead Imam is now invested in the living Imam, who in fact is the embodiment of the same indivisible spirit, worship of a dead Imam means worship of a mere corpse, since his light or nūr has now passed on to the reigning Imam. It is for this reason that Ismailis will not undertake pilgrimages to the tomb of any of their Imams or pīrs in history, no matter however illustrious they may have been. This notion serves to throw light on the intense importance attached to the contemporary Imam at any particular time.

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Thus the supreme importance of the Imām-i zamān, or the "Imam of the Age" was stressed now and again, and it constitutes the chief pillar in modern Ismaili thought: "you know that today the world and human life change every moment. Everything keeps on changing and in such circumstances only the Hāzir Imām can give true guidance. Ismailis do not have a written book containing guidance - they have a living Imam."[44] The usefulness of this principle for facilitating and explaining changes could not have been more explicitly recognized than in the following farmān of the Aga Khan III:

".... In fact all Ismaili institutions and customs are meant to be temporary and that is why Ismailis believe in a 'Hāzir Imām'- to vary, according to the circumstances, their spiritual and higher life.

This is the fundamental difference between Ismailis and other Muslims - this faith of an ever-living guide.

Even in my Imāmat of 63 years many farmāns, guidances and advices have been fundamentally different to former farmāns, guidances and advices." [45]

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Hence we find the central doctrine of the living Imam and the historical circumstances of the Khojā Ismailis during the period of the Imāmat of the Aga Khan III and the present Aga Khan, distinctly co-related. It is not surprising therefore that reforms in the community were remarkably successful and speedy. What is especially important to note is that the authority of the Aga Khan extended over the whole of community-life, including, that is, its social and economic spheres. In connection with the reform in these spheres, moreover, the personal careers and accomplishments of the Aga Khan III and the present Aga Khan have been extremely important. As H.S. Morris notes, the "personal authority and prestige of the late Aga Khan, combined with his position as imam, allowed him to act as what one might call an 'institutionalized prophet'."[46] His career "as an international statesman and European aristocrat increased, if that were possible, his prestige with his followers."[47] In this way, through the weight of his authority and experience he rendered possible a major breakthrough in the organization of the community.

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Similarly, the present Aga Khan's leadership has been responsible for equally dramatic changes in the outlook of his East African followers in the crucial years following independence. In this way, the circumstances of East African history, and the pressure of important events and changes on the community in East Africa, forced the Imam to become increasingly involved in leading his followers in secular matters. Although according to the doctrine of the community the Imam is both a spiritual as well as a temporal overlord, the growing interests of the community in secular affairs called for a degree of involvement on the part of the Imam which was unprecedented in the history of the Khojā Ismailis since conversion. Thus, the provision in the doctrine that the Imam can guide his followers in purely wordly matters in addition to the spiritual, was put into practice to maximum extent, so much so that it is this aspect of his role that attracts more attention outside the community and, sometimes, within it as well. Never in the history of the Khojā Ismailis was its religious and temporal leadership so perfectly synthesized in such a systematic fashion.

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Conclusions: continuity and change

This study has been dealing with a society one of the most marked features of which is that there have been important changes in the organization, values and standards, habits and customs of its members. The Ismailis in East Africa have now and then found themselves confronted by the necessity of undertaking new experiments in organization, making fresh adaptations to an unending series of important (and often unpredictable) events, and effecting re-adjustments when the equilibrium of the society has been in danger of being upset. At the same time, the over-all pattern of the society, especially that consisting of factors related to its religion, has remained constant. A consideration of the process of change and the factor of continuity in the history of the society is thus crucial, for it is only then that the over-all shape of the society in the period under consideration can be properly understood.

Anyone wishing to understand social change as a whole in a specific group of people has to grapple with a variety of difficult questions. What is the rate or pace at which change is taking place? In

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what direction is it heading? What are the sources of the change? What factors caused the process of change to take place in the first instance? How much of the society has changed - in other words what is the nature (speaking about both quality and intensity) of the change? These questions are as applicable to the Ismailis in East Africa as any other society in the world, but the answers offered would have to be based on a meticulous consideration of those features of the Ismaili society which have been demonstrated to be remarkable or functionally effective in some special and exceptional ways.

As for the rate of change, the concept is clearly relative, for any judgement about the speed at which change has taken place among the Ismailis would have to take account of the span of time selected for examination, as well as some comparative criterion of what can be called "speedy" or "slow". As for the direction of the change, it was clearly heading towards modernization and adaptation to the East African political and social environment (the two processes being closely interlinked). But it is less easy to make such a confident assertion in the context of <u>current</u> changes, for though adaptation to the

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aspirations of the Africans remains a supreme goal of the community, concern about its historical identity and religious heritage is also being felt increasingly strongly. Regarding the sources of the change, the institution of the Imāmat, and, more concretely, the manner in which the Aga Khans utilized their authority in the community to pragmatic ends, occupy, as we have seen, a central place in the analysis. In understanding what made the changes imperative in the first place, the novelty of the economic, political and cultural situation in East Africa (as contrasted to the pattern prevalent in India), is supremely essential. The last question, regarding the nature and depth of the change, is most fundamental of all, and as such calls for careful consideration.

The question as to how far the process of change has penetrated (or has failed to penetrate) the basic strata of the society's structure is a difficult and complex question. For the answer depends ultimately on which and how many aspects of the society's structure are assumed to be basic or fundamental, and how many are considered as ancillary

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or subordinate. Moreover, the changes that have affected the society can be understood concretely only by isolating the various departments of the system, as we have done, in broad outlines, in the previous chapters. It hardly needs pointing out, however, that many of these changes can be seen to have led to reverberations in areas of the community's life other than those immediately affected (although the effect has not always been direct or immediate). An understanding of the whole pattern of the process of change, further change elsewhere in the community as a result of the first, and consequent re-adjustment, therefore, demands a keen eye for inter-balance. Moreover, since the change is an ongoing process, since, in other words, the society is constantly in motion, analysis becomes proportionately more difficult. Our ambition here is relatively modest and our attempt here will be confined to stating some general though by no means conclusive assumptions regarding the extent of change in the Ismaili community in East Africa since the time of migration and settlement.

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The discussion in the previous chapters should leave no doubt about the fact there have been numerous changes in the organization and life-mode of the Ismailis in East Africa since the time they settled there. The pattern of relationship in India had been highly traditional, with heavy emphasis on kinship and personal, particularistic considerations. In East Africa, the family has moved progressively in the direction of the nuclear set-up, kinship is considered to a slightly lesser extent in matters of organization and leadership, and a massive administrative structure has been erected. What is more, the life-style of the community-members has become progressively Westernized, and contact and integration with the indigenous population has been steadily accelerated. Despite these momentous changes, however, the system as a whole has remained fundamentally unaltered. In the ultimate analysis, this fact owes itself to the institution of the Imāmat. The principle of allegiance and obedience to the Imam has remained pivotal in the community, and so long as this principle remains as the foundation of the structure, it is wrong to speak of any important basic alteration. Moreover, the whole structure of

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religious beliefs and rites has also remained recognizably same, and although important modifications were and are being introduced here and there, changes in this sphere have been very gradual in comparison to the social sphere, and the basic pattern has therefore remained unaltered. The jamātkhānā has remained as a mainspring of the religious and social consciousness of the followers and has in fact gained in importance, through the extension of its function, in that it has become the very hub of Ismaili activity in social and economic spheres. It is useful here to adopt a distinction drawn by Talcott Parsons between change of system and change within a system. The distinction is taken up, for one, by Lewis Coser, who suggests that we may justifiably speak of change of system only when "all major structural relations, its basic institutions, and its prevailing value system have been drastically altered...." The fact that among the Ismailis the over-all system has been preserved remarkably intact indicates that those changes that have affected the community have taken place, despite their momentous nature, within the over-all system. However, it is important to note that changes within a system may lead to or

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even constitute a change of system in the long run. It is only over a period of time commensurate with the rate of change that the observer can notice a fundamental change having taken place as a consequence of apparently superficial changes, in the form of an aggregate or sum-total of such changes. Since in the case of the Ismailis the religious system forms the criterion for ascertaining the extent and depth of the change, the way to determine this is by taking a look at the religious situation in the community today, and asking whether it displays any characteristics that can be distinctly related to the changes in the social sphere of the community over the century. One process to which reforms of a modernizing nature would be expected to lead is secularization. Therefore, a pertinent question is whether and to what extent secularization has affected contemporary Ismailism.

One factor conducive to secularization which has come into being among the Ismailis as a result of the circumstances of East African history, is the increasing separation of activities. Whereas formerly nearly all the roles of the individual Ismaili were located within the frontiers of the community,

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owing to the developments related in the previous chapters, these roles have become increasingly spread out or diversified into areas outside the boundaries of the community. In other cases, new roles have been added, which again fall outside the matrix of the community. This is an important factor, and can be best understood through specific illustrations.

An important instance of this process of differentiation or diversification of roles is to be found in the occupational sphere. In the early days of their settlement in East Africa, the Ismailis were mainly retail traders on a small-scale basis, managing their concerns either single-handedly or in collaboration with relatives. When they went into large-scale concerns, however, it became necessary for them to adopt more sophisticated commercial techniques, and to have contacts with non-Ismaili traders, thus leading to friendships and partnerships with persons not belonging to the community. Nevertheless, the Ismailis maintained their foothold in the community through endogamy and through regular attendance in the jamātkhānā. In recent years, however, there has been a steady growth of a distinct group within the community consisting of professionals.

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And it is important to note that professional education has a secular ethic of its own, which is at best independent of the religious ethos of the community. A related development is also to be found in the activities of the younger generation. To begin with, more and more Ismaili youngsters go in for professional education, thus separating themselves from the family occupation and, indirectly, adopting a life-style and cultivating an outlook markedly different from, if not contrary to, that of their parents. Moreover the schools, as we saw earlier, have become multi-racial, with the result that there is decreasing inter-action with the community-structure. Youth activities, such as scouting, etc., also lead to initiation into a "neutral" secular ethos shared by children of all communities. Again, as was suggested in the last chapter, while the rigorous religious ethics of early Ismailism drew from the followers such a total commitment that the old order was effectively over-hauled, the hold of traditionalism was weakened and a potent leverage was provided for modernization, such a development, after a certain time, is likely to cease to require religious backing and to become self-generating. Last, but not least, the rapid and

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dramatic growth of African nationalism and the establishment of independent government demanded active participation, which the Ismailis, as we saw earlier, have been quick to offer. The over-all effect of all these events and developments on the religious situation in the community has been that its ethos is no longer all-encompassing, in that the monopoly of the community over all the various roles of the individual Ismaili has been broken. Thus there has been a narrowing down of the actual sway of the religion in the individual's practical life, which has come under an increasing number of domains of activity which are outside the community and the ethics of which consist in a kind of autonomous rationality. This does not, of course, prove whether secularization has or has not gained ground; but it does show beyond all doubt that the conditions which have emerged are favourable to the growth of a secular mentality.

In the 50's and the 60's both the Imam himself as well as the community leaders found it necessary to re-emphasize the pristine religious identity of the community, and to stimulate a revival of interest in

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religion. This in itself suggests that signs of incipient secularization were discernible. It also suggests, however, particularly if such a revival was deep and widespread, that the possibility of a secularizing process being effectively forestalled was strengthened by these measures. In 1936 the Aga Khan III had said in a farmān: "you should not forget your ancient religion. The banks of a river keep on changing but the water remains the same. Just as the water in a river is everflowing, so the line of Imāmat never stops and is perpetual."[48] Similar farmāns were repeated now and then in the last two decades of the Aga Khan III's Imāmat. The present Aga Khan's re-emphasis on religious understanding is well-known in the community. In view of the more rapid and momentous changes in the organization of the community under his Imāmat, his statements on religious issues are greeted more eagerly and deemed specially significant. On the whole, his interpretation of the faith is at once more in line with general Islamic thought, and more addressed to pragmatic ends. (For instance, regular prayer, according to him, is essential in order to provide "humility in success and strength in adversity."[49])

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His farmāns to the community thus appear to be called forth by a clear recognition of the possibility that a secular or materialistic outlook may find root in the community as a sequel to changing circumstances ushered in by technological progress. Clearly, it is in the belief that he has a responsibility to avert the spread of such an outlook that he periodically makes farmāns such as these: "If my spiritual children were ever to manage their lives in such a way so as to come to believe that their minds create rather than having been created, and that their material comfort is such that spiritual humility is no longer warranted, I can tell you now that the true and real happiness which I pray it should be your blessing to experience, will never touch your hearts."[50] And, on the same note: "It must never be said generations hence that in our greed for the material goods of the rich West we have foresaken our responsibilities to the poor, to the orphans, to the traveller, to the single woman.

"The day we no longer know how, nor have the time nor the faith to bow in prayer to Allah because the human soul that He has told us is eternal is no longer of sufficient importance to us to be worthy of an

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hour of our daily working, profit-seeking time, will be a sunless day of despair."[51]

On the whole, the present Aga Kham, being young and educated in the West, conforms to the expectations of the loyal but educated young members in the community, who enthusiastically take pride in having an "atomic-age Imam" at the helm of the community. Indeed, the late Aga Khan, while appointing his grandson to succeed him, stated in his will that in view of "fundamentally altered conditions in the world in the very recent years due to the great changes which have taken place, including the discoveries of atomic science", he thought it important that he should be succeeded "by a young man who has been brought up .... in the midst of the new age and who brings a new outlook on life to his office as Imam." [52] If the Aga Khan succeeds in evoking enthusiasm among his followers for the ideals of faith, which he has up to now shown himself eager to do, it may well be that the growth of the secular mentality will have been checked. In the course of achieving this, however, it is not improbable that he may give the lead or act as an agent, either deliberately or unwittingly, in the emergence of religious attitudes integrated with the

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prevailing circumstances and thus indicating a modification of certain traditional doctrines. This, however, is a matter for the future, and as such we are but in a realm of conjecture as far as this point is concerned. What is important to bear in mind, however, is that the social and spiritual facets of the Imam's leadership are still as thoroughly blended into each other as they were during the life of his grandfather. This aspect of his position, combined with his supreme say in the community, is apt to continue to nurture a religious consciousness in the community. This fact, however, brings us to a last important question - to what extent, if any, has the Imāmat itself been affected by changed circumstances?

The beliefs concerning the Imāmat in Ismailism have been considered with a fair measure of detail in this study. It is important to remember that these beliefs were derived both from the esoteric speculations blended with Sūfī or mystical metaphors, as well as the Hindu doctrine of divine incarnations. An important trend in Ismailism under the last and the present Aga Khans has consisted in a steady reduction

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of the prominence of ideas about the Imam depicting him as an embodiment of the divine essence, which form a central feature of the gīnāns, discussed in detail in Chapter II of this thesis. The Aga Khan III himself scareely made any reference to these ideas for a long time since the turn of this century. In a significant farmān made at Bombay in 1950, he suggested that the philosophy of the Imāmat should be expounded in accordance with Islamic principles.[53] The present Aga Khan has carried the streamlining process even farther, and it appears that he clearly deprecates any tendency on the part of his followers to attach importance to the Imāmat at the expense of fundamental Islamic dogmas. To begin with, his tone, although charged with authority, is overtly "human" in that he relies increasingly on appeal to good sense rather than solely on his position as Imam, in pushing reforms in the community. Secondly, his farmāns abound with references to Islam rather than Ismailism - it is clear that he is steering the religious impulses of his followers onto the broader Islamic front rather than Ismailism. No doubt, the principle of Imāmat still remains as important as ever, but it is couched in increasingly milder language, more in line with early moderate Ismailism.

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Despite this, however, the relationship between the Imam and the Ismailis remains the same. No matter how the Imāmat is understood and interpreted in theological thought, its pivotal place in Ismaili doctrine, and the emphasis on allegiance and obedience to him, has survived the crucial years of transition, and shows signs of doing so in the years to come. The close ties between the Imam and his followers, and the sentiments of warm reciprocal affection which are repeatedly displayed by the Imam and the followers, continue unimpaired. In so far as this is true, it can be safely concluded that despite changes of a far-reaching character crowding the eventful history of the community in this period of transition and vicissitude, the core of the system, which furnishes its essential outlines, has remained the same.

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APPENDIX

Notes and References

CHAPTER I

1 See Strothmann, R., article on "Shī'a" in Encyclopaedia of Islam. The reference primarily intended here is to Abu-l-Aswad ad-Du'alī.

2 His principal works are Rawshna'i-nāma, Sa'ādat-nāma, Wajhi din, and Safar-nāma.

3 See for instance Haft Bāb by Abu Ishāq Quhistānī; Fasl dar Bayāni Shinākht-i-Imām, by unknown author; Naşīru'd-dīn Tūsī, Rawdatu't-Taslim; and Pandyāt-i jawānmardī, believed to be the sayings of the Imam Mustanşir bi'l-lāh II.

4 Hollister, J.N., The Shi'a of India, p. 339 ff., and al-Hamdami, Abbas H., The Beginnings of the Ismā'īlī Da'wa in Northern India, p. 1.

5 Hollister, op. cit., p. 343, and Hamdami, op. cit., p. 4.

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8 Ivanow, Wldamir, Collectanea, pp. 20-21.

9 Ivanow, Wldamir, "The Sect of Imam Shah in Gujrat", Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (1936), p. 6.

10 Ibid., p. 61.

11 Ibid., p. 68.

CHAPTER II

1 Ivanow, Collectanea, pp. 3-4.

2 Preface to Collection of Gīnāns by Pīr Hasan Kabīrdīn and other Authorized Pīrs, p. 8; and Nūr-um-Mubīn, p. 226.

3 Hollister, The Shi'a of India, p. 351; Nānjiāṇī, Khojā Vratānt, p. 130.

4 Syed Mujtaba Ali, The Origin of the Khojās and their Religious Life Today, p. 40; Nānjiāṇī, op.cit., p. 130.

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6 Preface to Collection of Gīnāns by Pīr Shams, pp. 4-9.

7 For traditions concerning the garbīs, see preface to Collection of Gīnāns by Pīr Shams, p. 4, and Ivanow, op. cit., p. 44. For the actual garbīs, see Pīr Shams, pp. 84-108, and Ivanow, op. cit., pp. 55-85.

8 See Pīr Shams, garbi no. 6, p. 88, and Ivanow, op.cit., p.61.

9 Preface to Pīr Shams, p. 6; Nūr-um-Mubīn, p. 231.

10 See Bombay High Court Reports, 1866, Vol. XII, pp. 353-354; Hollister, op.cit., p. 357 & p. 407; Syed Mujtaba Ali, op.cit., p.42; Titus, Indian Islam, p.102.

11 Preface to Collection of Gīnāns by Pīr Sadardīn, p. 4; Nūr-um-Mubīn, p.302.

12 Preface to Pīr Sadardīn, pp. 5-6; Nūr-um-Mubīn, p. 303.

13 See Anant Akhādo, pp. 12-13, and Nav Chhugā.

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21 See above, Chapter I, PP. 16-18.

22 As one particular work demonstrating the points of comparison between the mysticism in the two faiths, see Zaehner, Hindu and Muslim Mysticism.

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25 Pīr Sadardīn, G. 183, v. 6, p. 201.

26 Pīr Hasan Kabirdīn, G. 51, v. 7, p. 80.

27 See above, p. 28.

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29 Buj Niranjan, p. 249.

30 Pīr Sadardīn, G. 40, vs. 1-2 and 7-10, pp. 47-48.

31 Ibid, G. 175, vs. 1-2, p. 212.

32 Saiyad Imāmshāh, G. 6, vs. 5-6, p. 8.

33 Anant Akhādo, v. 6, p. 6.

34 See for instance Saiyad Imāmshāh, G. 99, p. 131 ff.

35 Ivanow, "The Sect of Imamshah in Gujrat", p. 42.

36 See Bombay High Court Reports, 1966, Vol. XII, pp. 345-346.

37 See Saiyad Imāmshāh, G. 99, v.1, p. 131; Pīr Hasan Kabīrdīn, G. 44, v.1, p. 69.

38 The Anant Akhādo is one single ginan which reflects this idea vividly, using a lavish and elaborate imagery to describe the pageantry of the expected event.

39 Pīr Sadardīn, G. 141, vs. 4-5, p. 147.

40 Pīr Sadardīn, G. 39, p. 43 ff.

41 Pīr Shams, G. 29, pp. 32-33.

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42 See for instance Pīr Hasan Kabīrdīn, G. 47, vs. 25-35, p. 74.

43 Ibid, G. v. 1 ff., p. 72.

44 Pir Sadardīn, G. 147, pp. 154-155.

45 See for instance Max Weber, The Sociology of Religion, chapters XII and XIV.

46 Pīr Shams, G. 3, vs. 1-2, p. 2.

47 Saiyad Imāmshāh, G. 51, v.5, p. 64.

48 Pīr Shams, G. 40, pp. 43-45.

49 Pīr Sadardīn, G. 151, p. 158 ff., and G. 180, vs. 7-10, p. 199; Saiyad Imāmshāh, G. 29, p. 34, vs. 3-4.

50 Pir Shams.

51 Instances of the metaphorical identification of the world and the ocean abound in the gīnāns. For one particular reference, see Saiyad Imāmshāh, G. 54, v. 2, p. 69.

52 Pīr Sadardīn, G. 114, pp. 118-119.

53 Saiyad Imāmshāh, G. 95, pp. 127-128; Pīr Sadardīn, G. 106, pp. 111-112, and G. 115, pp. 119-121; and Imām Begam, G. 35, pp. 250-251, and G. 41, p. 255.

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57 Pīr Sadardīn, G. 75, v. 7, p. 79.

58 To Munīvarbhāi Nānī, vs. 22-23, p. 180.

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61 Ibid., v. 212, p. 282.

62 Ibid, vs. 283-287, pp. 212-213.

63 See Pīr Hasan Kabīrdīn, G. 66, pp. 95-96, G. 74, pp. 104-106, and G. 75, p. 106; also Saiyad Imāmshāh, G. 104, pp. 137-138

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65 See Pīr Sadardīn, G. 75, vs. 1-4, p. 79.

66 Ibid., G. 126, v. 8, p. 130.

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74 Ibid., v. 3, p. 252.

75 Ibid., v. 4, p. 250.

76 Ibid., v. 6, p. 250.

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86 Pir Hasan Kabīrdīn, G. 42, vs. 5-6, p. 67.

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88 Pīr Sadardīn, G. 53, pp. 59-60.

89 See above, p. 56.

90 Preface to Pīr Sadardīn, p. 6; Hollister, op.cit., p. 356.

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CHAPTER III

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48 Nairobi, 6-10-1905 (Henceforth in this thesis, the farmāns of the Imam will be referred to in the footnotes by the name of the place where they were made, and the date on which they were made. Telegraphic messages and correspondence from the Imam will normally be denoted by the name of the place from which they were issued, and the date they carry.)

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